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MALCOM KIRK

ROBERT HARDY'S SEVEN DAYS

MALCOM KIRK

A Tale of Moral Heroism in Overcoming the World

BY

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"IN HIS STEPS" "THE CRUCIFIXION OF PHILLIP STRONG"

"HIS BROTHER'S KEEPER" ETC.

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PREFACE.

"Malcom Kirk" is the last in a series of stories written originally to be read to my Sunday evening congregations in the Central Church, Topeka, Kansas. It is not an imaginary story, but has its basis in the living experiences of actual men and women of to-day. The author sends it out with a prayer that its message may help many struggling souls to "overcome the world."

CHARLES M. SHELDON.

Central Church, TOPEKA, Kansas.

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MALCOM KIRK.

CHAPTER I.

HIS INTRODUCTION TO THE READER.



THE senior class in the theological seminary at Hermon had just had its picture taken by the photographer, and the members were still grouped about the steps of the chapel.

"There's one thing the photographer forgot," said a short, red-faced man who sat in the middle of the group; "he didn't think to say, 'Look pleasant now, if you please.'"

"He didn't need to. We all look so, anyhow."

The man who spoke sat immediately behind the first speaker and had his hands on the other's shoulders.

"I'm sure we don't feel very pleasant. I mean, we are not pleased to think this is almost the last

time we shall be together as a class," said a tall, delicate, pale-faced man who was standing up at the top of the steps with his back against the door.

He spoke in a quiet, low voice, and there was a hush after he spoke. There is as much sentiment among theological students as among any average number of professional men. In some directions there is more than among the like number of law or medical students.

After a moment of silence, some one began to ask questions about the future prospects of the class. The red-faced, jolly-looking young man in the centre was going to take a church in northern Vermont. The man just behind him had received a call as assistant pastor to an institutional church in Philadelphia. The delicate-featured student up by the chapel door was going to teach a school for a year and find a church as soon as he had paid off his college debts.

Every member of the class had spoken of his prospects except one. This one sat on the extreme edge of the group as if he had purposely chosen to be as inconspicuous as possible in the picture. A stranger carelessly walking by would have instantly judged him to be the homeliest, least interesting man in the class. He had dull brown hair, very heavy and stiff, pale blue eyes, a rather large mouth, the lips of which, however, were firm and full of character, high cheek bones and an unusually high forehead. His arms and legs were very long, and his general

attitude as he sat on the edge of the steps was almost strikingly awkward.

"Here's Kirk hasn't said a word yet," cried the little man who had first spoken. "What are you going to do, Kirk?"

Every member of the class turned and looked at the figure sitting on the edge of the group. It was noticeable that while several of the class smiled at the question, "What are you going to do?" there was no disrespect in the smile, and on every man's face was a look of real interest amounting to an excited curiosity.

Malcom Kirk smiled slightly as he looked up. He did not look at any member of the class in particular, but seemed to include them all in a friendly interest that was affectionate and gentle.

"I don't know. I am waiting for a call. I've had one and accepted it, but I need another before I can go to work."

Everybody stared. The man up by the chapel door had a look in his eye as if he understood what Kirk meant, but no one else seemed to catch his meaning.

"My first call was from the Lord, several years ago. I feel perfectly satisfied with it. He wants me to preach. But, so far, none of the churches seem to agree with Him. At least, none of them have asked me to preach. So I'm waiting for my second call."

He spoke without the least touch of irreverence or even humour. The impression made on the class

was a feeling of honest perplexity concerning the future prospects of Malcom Kirk.

"I don't see," said the man who was to be the assistant pastor of the institutional church in Philadelphia, "why Kirk hasn't had a call to a large church. We all know he has more brains than all the rest of us put together. I think it is a shame the churches should pass by such a man and——"

"It's easy enough to see the reason;" Kirk spoke without the shadow of any irritation in his manner. "You fellows know, as well as I do, that brains under hair like mine don't count with the average city congregation." He laughed good-naturedly, and the class joined him. Then some one said:

"Why don't you dye it black, Kirk?"

"I can't afford to," he replied gravely. "That isn't the only reason I don't get a call. I'm too awkward in the pulpit. Did I tell anybody the last time I preached in the Third Church at Concord I knocked a vase of flowers off the pulpit with my elbow, and when it fell on the floor it woke up every officer in the church. Of course, I never could expect to get a call from that church."

Everybody laughed and Kirk drew one of his feet up under him and smiled a little. At the same time no one could detect a trace of ill-humour or lack of seriousness in his tone or manner. The first impression Malcom Kirk made on people was that of downright sincerity. The longer people knew him, the stronger this impression grew.

"That's nothing," exclaimed one of the class after the laugh subsided. "I had a great time two weeks ago when I went up to Manchester to preach. I laid my notes down on the desk, and there was a strong breeze blowing across the pulpit, which stood directly between two open windows, and while the anthem was being sung, half my sermon blew out of one of the windows."

"The congregation was spared just so much, then, wasn't it?" said a man down on the bottom step.

"Accidents will happen to any one," said Kirk, quietly. "But mine are not accidents. They're habits of life. I can overcome them, though. The churches don't know that. So I don't blame them for not giving me a call."

"Well, I think it's a shame, as I said," the assistant pastor of the institutional church repeated. "The churches think more of the way a man dresses and behaves in the pulpit than they do of what he says. And they criticise everything, from his prayers to the polish of his boots."

There was silence again. The class had been over all that many times before, and they were practically a unit in their opinion of what the churches seemed to demand in a successful candidate for a call.

Finally some one recurred to the class picture again.

"I don't believe Kirk's in this picture at all. He sat too far out. The photographer kept telling him

to move in farther. But I believe he moved out again just at the last minute.

"I only moved one of my feet out," said Kirk solemnly. "I thought one of them was enough. I didn't want to have to pay extra for more than my share of photograph."

"But we want the whole of you in the picture, Kirk," said the man next to him, laying an affectionate hand on Kirk's arm. The entire class turned again towards the awkward shambling figure and seemed to repeat the gesture of the one classmate. Then the talk drifted back again to the future plans of the members and to serious and humorous reminiscences of the three years' course, until one after another went away and the class group was broken up into little knots of twos and threes as the men walked to their rooms or lingered under the great elms, arm in arm.

Kirk and the companion who had laid his hand on his friend's arm remained a little while on the steps.

"What will you do, Kirk?"

"I think I shall offer myself to the Home Missionary Society, and ask them to send me to the hardest place they can find out West, somewhere."

"But how about all your scholarship, your—your ability?" The other man hesitated for the right word.

Kirk coloured slightly, the first indication he had shown of a sensitiveness in that direction.

"I can use anything I know anywhere. Preach I must, even if I have to go into the streets and speak from the tail end of a wagon, and never have a parish. But I do want a parish and a people. I can love people like everything. I feel hungry to have a parish of my own."

The other man was silent. He had never felt just like that, but he thought he could understand.

"I hope you will have such a church some time. I would like to be a member of it."

"Thank you!" Kirk smiled. "Wilson, if you were that church, I should have a unanimous call. I am sure there is a work for me somewhere in God's great world. Else, why did He give me such a passion to speak to men and love them?"

Malcom Kirk looked out across the great Seminary campus and spoke with a conscious cry of heart-longing. The beautiful June day was nearly gone. The future for him was as indefinite and unsettled as any condition can be. Yet the strong, patient, undisturbed realities of his call to preach the gospel were as unmoved as the sky of that lovely June day. The light would soon fade out of the heavens, but the sky would still remain.

The next day was commencement at Hermon Seminary. The chapel was filled with a representative congregation of Hermon people, friends and relatives of the classes, the trustees and officers of the Seminary, and the usual number of undergraduates.

Before the speaking began, the president of the

faculty came forward to make the usual list of announcements concerning the annual prizes and scholarships.

It was the custom at Hermon for the annual announcements to be made at the close of the exercises of commencement. For some reason, however, this order was changed, and the audience listened with unusual interest to the President's remarks.

He had read the names of the winners in Hebrew and New Testament Scholarship, and the successful man in the general work of the entire course. He paused now at the end of the list, and then read the last name, looking down at the graduating class as he did so.

"The German scholarship is awarded to Malcom Kirk, of the graduating class."

There had been a slight rustling of applause as the different names were read, but when Kirk's name was spoken, the class applauded vigorously, and the clapping extended over the chapel very heartily. Kirk sat bolt upright and blushed very red, and Wilson, who was sitting by him, exclaimed in a loud whisper, "Good! That means seven hundred dollars and a year abroad."

Kirk said nothing. There was no question he was pleased. His lips trembled and he shuffled his feet under the pew, and his great hands opened and shut nervously. When his turn came to go up on the platform to speak, he felt as if his natural awkwardness

and shyness had been doubled by the attention directed to him through the winning of the best scholarship in the gift of the Seminary.

The minute he began to speak, all this shyness disappeared. It was true Kirk loved to face an audience. He loved people, and after the first moment of conscious fright was passed, he eagerly entered the true speaker's position and enjoyed both the audience and his own effort in addressing it.

His subject was "The Business of Preaching." What was it? How did it differ from oratory? What was the object of preaching? What were the materials of preaching? And so on. He spoke straight on, with his heart in what he said. It was in the thought of more than one minister in the audience that this man who had won the German scholarship had a remarkably good voice. More than one pastor felt like envying the peculiar tone of that voice. It had a carrying quality that commanded attention and held it. And nearly every man on the Seminary faculty was wondering why Kirk had received no call from any church. There was no question as to his ability. He had both brains and heart. It is true his face and figure were not in his favour. He was not of the orthodox ministerial cut. His clothes were not a very good fit. But were the churches looking for a fashion plate? For an ornamental failure behind the pulpit?

In the audience that morning there were also two other persons who paid close attention to Kirk while

he was speaking. One of these was a young man nearly Kirk's age, with a face and manner that spoke of the most sensitive, refined breeding. It was the face of a dreamer. Dark eyes, waving dark hair, handsome features, thin, delicate, curved lips, the hands of an artist. His clothes were made of the finest material and bore the stamp of that unconscious gentlemanly feeling which always goes with a man who has all his life been used to expensive details. As he sat there listening to Malcom Kirk this morning, Francis Raleigh was attracted by the voice of the speaker. He had listened to the others with a conventional interest that did not mean anything to him. He started the moment that Kirk spoke the first word, and fastened his look upon him until he was through. He then resumed his previous attitude of mild indifference to the programme.

The other person who followed Kirk's speech with especial interest, was a young woman who sat in that part of the church reserved for the trustees of the Seminary and their families. It is said that the young women who work in the nitro-glycerine and dynamite establishment at Ardeer, Scotland, have the most perfect complexions in the world, owing to the nature of the peculiar materials they handle and breathe. It is very certain that Dorothy Gilbert had never lived or worked in any more explosive atmosphere than that of her own intense energy, but her face would fairly have rivalled that of any Scotch lass in Ardeer. There was a striking resemblance in many ways to

Francis Raleigh's beauty. It might have been due to the similarity in training and in tastes. The New England type of independent, morally calm, but thoroughly interested activity was well represented in Dorothy Gilbert. Her father sat beside her, a dignified, carefully-dressed man of fifty-five, iron grey hair and moustache, a successful book publisher, with a beautiful home in Hermon and business in Boston. Dorothy was the only child at home. She had graduated a year before at Northampton, and was now taking a special course in music, going to the city three days in the week.

She did not attempt to reason with herself about the interest she felt in Malcom Kirk's appearance. Divinity students in general were mildly stupid creatures to her. She had been born and brought up in Hermon, and classed them as a part of the fauna and flora of the town, but her interest had never gone any farther than that. She had met Malcom Kirk several times during his three years' course. Once she had sat by him at a dinner given by her father to the class. She had found him an interesting talker, and was surprised when she thought it over afterwards. His homely hair, his shyness, his remarkable awkwardness had amused her. She had laughed a little with her father about something that happened at the table. But she could not help listening to him to-day with added interest as he went on. Was it the voice? There was something very winning in it. There was none of the Yankee, New England nasal

tone about it. It was full and deep, and suggested an organ pipe exactly tuned.

Like Francis Raleigh, she seemed to lose all vital interest in the morning's programme when Kirk finished. While the next speaker was on the platform, she turned her head to look over the chapel, and her eyes met those of Francis Raleigh. He smiled, and she returned the smile, while a slight colour deepened on her face. And he thought to himself it was certainly more interesting to glance now and then at a face like Dorothy Gilbert's, than to stare steadily at a tall, solemn young man on the platform who was talking about the Philosophy of the Prophetic Idea and its evolution in the Old Testament.

The programme was finished at last, and the friends of the graduates lingered about the platform congratulating the different speakers. Very many of the visitors came up and warmly greeted Kirk. Among them was one alert, active, middle-aged man who said he wanted to see Kirk especially on a matter of importance. So the two went up to Kirk's room and the stranger explained his business briefly.

CHAPTER II.

KIRK RECEIVES HIS SECOND CALL AND ACTS UPON IT.



'M superintendent of missions for Kansas. I want you to take a church out there. You're just the man I've been looking for. Don't say no, for I must have you."

Kirk looked at the superintendent thoughtfully. Was this the second call he had mentioned?

"There's this scholarship. I feel the need of the training abroad."

"All right. Go on with that. But there's a church that will be ready for you at the end of your year there. It's in the growing town of Conrad, and a great opening for hard work. The man there now will leave at the end of the year."

Kirk said nothing. He looked out of his window. Right across the campus stood the beautiful residence of Dorothy Gilbert's father. It was not the first time he had looked in that direction.

"Of course," continued the superintendent briskly, "you understand the church is a Home Missionary church and cannot offer you a large salary. They

can raise, perhaps, four hundred or possibly four hundred and fifty dollars. The society will grant two hundred or two hundred and fifty. You could count on about eight hundred dollars, probably."

Kirk was silent. He turned his head away from the window and glanced around his room. The shabby-backed books, the simple pieces of furniture, the faded carpet, the meagre furnishings, all smote him keenly. It was not the first time his poverty had thrust itself upon him coarsely, but he seemed to feel it more deeply than ever. As he faced the superintendent, who was waiting for a reply, Kirk had a most astonishing and absurd feeling come over him. He was not thinking about his German scholarship or about the superintendent. The superintendent would have been smitten into bewilderment if he could have read Kirk's thought. What Kirk was saying to himself was, "How can Dorothy Gilbert and I live on eight hundred a year in a Home Missionary church?"

"Well," the superintendent spoke with a slight trace of impatience, "what do you say? Give me a favourable answer. You can make your mark out there. Plenty of hard work, but a good field. Tell me you'll take it."

"Very well. I promise to take the field if it is open when I finish my studies abroad."

Kirk spoke quietly, but his lips closed firmly, and he turned his head and looked out over the campus again.

There was a little more talk between them, and the superintendent went out.

The minute he was gone, Kirk pulled down his curtains and locked his door. It was a little after noon, and the regular commencement dinner was served at one. He walked up and down his darkened room talking to himself. His future was at last decided, at least, for a time. He had some place in the world. Some one wanted him. He was ambitious, as a Christian gentleman should be. He wanted to do great things in the Kingdom of God on earth. Could he do them in that little Home Missionary church?

It was not at all contrary to his regular habits of life that he kneeled down and prayed. It was a prayer of thanksgiving and also one of petition. He knew with perfect clearness as he kneeled in his darkened room that he loved Dorothy Gilbert with all his might. The complete absurdity of his position had nothing to do with the fact that he loved her. She was rich, she was accomplished, she was beautiful, she was of an old and distinguished family, but he loved her. He was poor, he was plain-looking, he had no prospects beyond his scholarship and seven or eight hundred dollars a year in a Home Missionary church, but he loved Dorothy Gilbert. It made no difference that his Christian training seemed to rebuke his choice of one so far removed from him in every way. That did not destroy his feeling for her, and did not change it.

In his prayer he cried for wisdom, he asked to be led by the Spirit.

He was not the man to wreck a life of Christian service on a passion of the heart, even if its hunger were never fed. But when he arose and went over to the Alumni Hall to join the class there at the final banquet, he carried with him the knowledge that the future for him must have Dorothy Gilbert with it if he would do or be all that he felt he had a right to pray for.

The week that followed Commencement Day at Hermon found Kirk almost alone in the Seminary building. He had been employed by one of the professors in doing some special copying of a book manuscript. In a few days this would be finished. He had fixed on the following Thursday to sail for Liverpool. He had determined to begin his studies as soon as possible. He had been to see the president of the faculty about his scholarship, and to his great relief found that he was largely free to study in the way that seemed of most value to himself.

"You see it's this way, sir," he had explained to the president. "It will do me very little good to go to a German University and take some special course in language or history. I feel the need of another method of study. If I can use this scholarship to study human conditions in large cities, going to the people for my material at first hand, it will be of infinitely larger value to me and to the Seminary than a course in lectures and books."

"You are free to mark out your own methods of study," replied the president. "According to the terms of the scholarship the only condition is a year spent abroad in some regular course of study, with a report of it to be made within six months to the Seminary."

So Kirk was happy in his thought of the year's work, and when the treasurer had given him the cheque for 700 dollars, and he had gone to Boston and engaged his passage in the intermediate cabin, he felt as if he had a very interesting year's life before him.

He had come back to his room and made his final preparations for leaving. They were very simple, necessarily. He was going light-handed, to live in the most frugal, economical manner possible. It was now Tuesday evening. His vessel sailed on Thursday afternoon. He was all ready to go, and yet he had an irresistible longing to see Dorothy Gilbert before he went.

He fought against the inclination until eight o'clock, and then did what he knew he would do all along—he dressed in the most careful manner he knew how, and walked straight across the campus to her house.

As he went up the steps he heard the piano. Dorothy was playing. When he was in the hall he glanced into the parlour and saw Francis Raleigh standing there.

Then a fit of timidity seized him. Something in

Raleigh's face and manner made him feel that it was impossible to see Dorothy Gilbert with the gifted artist. He asked the servant if Mr. Gilbert was at home, and said he wanted to see him a few moments.

It was the nearest to a lie that Malcom Kirk ever approached. However, when the servant ushered him into Mr. Gilbert's library, he was not sorry to have a talk with the publisher.

Mr. Gilbert had been abroad. Kirk asked him several questions about cities and people on the Continent. He grew every moment more interested and stayed for more than an hour. Mr. Gilbert insisted on presenting him with two or three copies of Baedeker, and followed him out into the hall when he finally rose to go, wishing him a successful year of study.

The piano had stopped, and the door into the parlour was closed, but Kirk could hear voices, and it seemed to him that they were unusually earnest. He imagined he could detect a tone of pleading in one of them.

He went out into the night and walked the Seminary campus under the grave elms for two or three hours. He felt disappointed. He went over his prospects. He viewed from all sides his position as a man with a career, and before he let himself into his dingy room he had gone down into a depth of self-depreciation that measured a valley of humiliation for him.

But when he awoke the next day he determined,

with a dull obstinacy that was a part of his character, that he would see Dorothy Gilbert before he went away. And when evening came he walked over to the house again.

She was playing the piano again, but this time alone. She turned round as Kirk entered, and smiled as if she were glad to see him, and before he had time to think of any possible shyness, he was talking about his prospects, the places he expected to visit, the methods he was planning to use.

As the talk went on, Dorothy Gilbert grew more interested. Kirk's voice had something to do with it. But aside from that he was at his best while talking about his life-work. Dorothy forgot that he was a divinity student. Several times she was startled at her response to his enthusiasm. He had planned an original trip abroad, and the details of what he intended to do roused her native intensity to see results.

But right in the midst of his explanation of what he expected to do in London, Kirk paused.

"I heard you playing the Traumerei when I came in, Miss Gilbert. Will you please play it again?"

Dorothy looked surprised at the abrupt change, but without a word went to the piano and began. Kirk knew enough about music to know that she played well—better than any one he had ever heard.

When she finished, she turned round and said, "You will hear some good music while you are abroad, Mr. Kirk. The Germans, especially, furnish

the people with the very best music in the parks and gardens at a very small price."

She suddenly coloured deeply, as she thought he might imply that she was thinking of his poverty, of his inability to hear expensive music in expensive places. If he thought of it, he made no sign that he noticed. But he said :

"I shall never hear any better music than I have heard to-night."

The minute he had said it he felt the same timidity seize him that came over him the evening before. But it passed away quickly, and to his relief he felt a certain inward strength and indomitable courage fill him. Dorothy was at first amused at the compliment, then she was suddenly excited by it. Kirk was as simple-hearted as a child. He had revealed his secret in the tone and manner of his words. It was the last thing in the world he had expected to do when he came. But greater and better and wiser men than Malcom Kirk have done as he did.

He rose at once and walked straight over to the fireplace. On the mantel was a miniature of Dorothy, painted by a New York artist, a young woman who was famous for such work.

"I have no right,"—Kirk spoke without a tremor—"but if I take this, and keep it for a year, sacredly to guard it from every eye but my own and never to speak of it, and then return it when I come back——"

She was so surprised that her self-possession

failed her. Kirk's hand was on the miniature with a mastery that Dorothy noticed even at that moment.

"You are not unwilling? I make no claim. I have none. I simply shall keep it for a year. Perhaps the constant sight of it will prove to me how hopeless——"

The man paused and looked straight at Dorothy. There was something so hungry and at the same time so unaffected in his look that again Dorothy was speechless. He took the picture and it lay in his great palm a moment, and then his fingers closed slowly over it. He looked up at her again. She had turned away, and was nervously tracing lines with her fingers on the table.

"I have no excuse to offer for what I have done," he said, and there was that in his voice that made Dorothy look up.

"I realise all the distance between us. It will do you no harm to let me have the picture, and may do me good."

Dorothy at last found her voice.

"I have not let you have it. It seems to me you have taken it, anyway."

"You did not say no," replied Malcom Kirk firmly. Then he paused as if waiting an answer. And again she was silent. He moved towards the hall. "I love you, Dorothy Gilbert," he said, and he looked almost handsome as he said it. He stood there an instant, and then he was gone, and Dorothy remained like one who has felt some great emotion,

not yet measured. She had refused to let Francis Raleigh have the miniature. He had begged for it. He, also, was going abroad to finish his studies in art. But when he asked for the picture, she had told him no, and he had gone away without a definite answer to his petition that she give him the original of the picture. For he had told her of his love before he went. And now this other! And he had gone with the miniature, after all! He had actually taken it! Dorothy said, "He had no right, but why did I not tell him so!" Somehow, Malcom Kirk was a part of her memory now. She had not time to ask what it might all mean. One moment she laughed, then she grew serious. Then she turned and played the Traumerei again. Then she wheeled about and said to herself with a short laugh: "The idea! a divinity student! and homely and awkward at that! Why, I have actually laughed at him!" But, nevertheless, she felt the impossibility of laughing at Malcom Kirk any more. No true woman ever laughs at the honest love of a man, no matter how poor or unattractive he may be. And Dorothy Gilbert was a true woman at heart.

As for Malcom Kirk, he went on board the steamer the next afternoon with a feeling that was almost content. It is true he felt a little uneasy to think he had told Dorothy Gilbert so plainly that he loved her. But then he was sure it had done no harm. It was the truth. And besides, when he came

back, would he return the picture without a word? Might he not claim the right to keep it always?

He scarcely pretended to answer this question. He found his way to his room in the intermediate cabin, and came out on the deck again. As the steamer went down the harbour, he thoughtfully reviewed his course and looked out into the new life before him with quiet hope.

It was ten o'clock when he went down to his room. As he proceeded to arrange his few effects in the little apartment called a cabin, one of the stewards came by. There were two or three other men sitting at the table in the dining and lounging room.

"Any of you a clergyman?" asked the steward.

No one answered, and Kirk, after a moment, stepped out and said, "I'm a clergyman. What is wanted?"

The steward looked a little doubtfully at the long, unattractive figure.

"There's a woman down aft, here, in a poor way. She wants some one to pray with her."

"I'll go," said Kirk quietly, and he followed the steward, not knowing as he went that this, his first ministry of service, was to prove one of the most remarkable events in his eventful life. Meanwhile, the steamer had reached the limits of the harbour; the great ocean now lay wide and solemn before her, and the look-out on the forward deck was saying to himself, "It's going to be a beautiful night."

On the promenade deck two men were pacing up and down.

"But how did it happen, Raleigh, that you took passage on the Cunard line? I thought you were planning to go by the Anchor line from New York."

"I did plan to go two weeks later, but circumstances changed my movements. I shall be glad to get to work again, and I'm thankful to be thrown in with you, Ed. We can talk over old college days."

They turned in front of the music room, and the light fell on Francis Raleigh's face. It was at this moment that Malcom Kirk, down in the intermediate cabin, kneeled to pray. The look-out on the bow was saying, "We shall have a quick voyage."

CHAPTER III.

A DEATH IN MID-OCEAN.



WHEN Malcom Kirk entered the little cabin room to which the steward led him, he found the assistant surgeon of the steamer bending over the figure in the berth there.

A woman was sitting, quietly looking on, near by.

The surgeon rose and beckoned Kirk to step outside a moment.

"You are a clergyman?"

Kirk nodded.

The surgeon looked at him as doubtfully as the steward had done, but he seemed satisfied at last.

"Well, you might as well know the woman has consumption. She may last until we reach Liverpool, and she may go before Sunday. She ought never to have been allowed passage."

"I can tell how that is," said the steward. "I noticed the woman come on with her baby. She looked as bright and pretty as any one. Seemed strong and sat out on deck until we left the dock."

Then she came down here and went to pieces. I've known one or two such cases before."

"That's true," said the surgeon gravely. "I'll be back before midnight. It will do no harm for you to see her." He spoke to Kirk and went away leaving him standing somewhat awkwardly by the half-open door.

The woman called in a faint voice, and Kirk went in.

"Are you the clergyman?" she asked.

"Yes," replied Kirk, simply. "Can I be of service to you? Do you want me to pray with you?"

The woman nodded. Kirk kneeled, and the other woman, who had been acting as nurse, bowed her head.

It was the first time Malcom Kirk had been called on to pray by the side of a dying person—the first service he had ever paid to suffering and sorrowing humanity when he was asked to take upon himself the burden and the joy of comfort. His own life had been free from physical weakness. His own family had moved away and scattered when he was a lad, and the death of both his father and mother when he was a child had left no impression on his early memory.

The situation, therefore, now impressed him strongly. But the impression was redeemed from painful egotism by his intense longing to be of help to this stranger. When he had told his Seminary classmate that he loved people, he had spoken one of

the largest truths of his great-hearted character. So his prayer went out to the God of all comfort, and it is very certain that he touched the heart of that human hunger for Divine compassion. For when he finished she thanked him, with a sob, while the other woman made no attempt to conceal the tears that ran down her face. She looked at Kirk as he rose, with increased respect. He said a few words simply but cheerfully, and then went out. The woman who had been nursing followed him and closed the door a moment.

"Thank you for coming in. It did her good. It's a sad case."

"Yes. Has she any relatives or friends on board?"

"No; as near as I have learned she has a sister in London. This sister has been writing her for some time to come there. This woman's husband died a few weeks ago. Since then she has been supporting herself in Boston by sewing. Her baby is six months old. She sold a few things, and with the help of her sister, who sent her a little money, she bought a ticket, and with a great effort reached the dock this afternoon. The ship's company did not know of her condition, or they certainly would never have let her come on board. That is all I know of the case. Of course, we will do all we can for her and the baby, now. The sea air may be a help to her after all."

The woman who spoke was only what some people call a "common" person. Kirk could see that. Yet

she was one of the great army of quiet, unselfish women who give the world true definitions of the term "motherhood."

She stepped to the door of her own room, which was close by, and beckoned Kirk to look in and see the baby.

He was sleeping in the upper berth, and Kirk looked at him gravely, wondering what sort of future awaited that bit of humanity. The woman shut the door gently and went back to the mother, while Kirk retired to his own narrow quarters, and in spite of the strange noises and the sights of the ocean through the little round port, he was soon fast asleep after a prayer for blessing on all who suffer and all who are in trouble.

The next day the woman sank rapidly. Every one in the intermediate cabin wanted to do something. There was no lack of care for the baby. Every woman wanted to help. Saturday the mother sank yet more rapidly, but rallied, as is often the case, and when the passengers gathered for a little service which Kirk was asked to lead, she wanted her door left open so that she could see, and hear the singing better.

That was a novel experience for Kirk. The intermediate cabin was not crowded as it would be on the return voyage. The passengers were mostly from what the English people call the "middle classes." We in America say the "common people." This means the people out of the plain ranks of labour, not

necessarily very poor, often well read, with love of home and, in most cases, with a religious life that flows deep through narrow channels, but is always true in its application to duty.

Kirk preached a simple sermon about Christ in His relation to the sea and those who live upon it. He touched on Christ's love of human kind and His compassion for all sorts of trouble. The sermon was easily understood. It helped. Kirk saw tears in many eyes. Many of the passengers thanked him after he was through. He went in and prayed briefly with the sufferer. And the day passed on slowly, with an unwonted calmness, as Sunday on board ship at sea is so often. The ocean was quiet. The sun went down without a cloud about it. And the sick woman seemed to rest easier as the lights were turned on, and the great steamer, with its freight of human tragedy and its uncounted value of souls, sailed untiringly on towards the old world.

Near morning the woman who was watching the sufferer sent for the surgeon. He came down, and Kirk, who was wakened by an unusual noise, heard him going by and rose and dressed, going out into the large cabin. The wind was roaring over the water and the vessel was beginning to rock for the first time since they left home.

"We are in for a storm," he heard one of the passengers say. He steadied himself and walked down to the sick woman's door and sat near, waiting expectantly as if he knew he would be summoned.

In a moment the door opened and the surgeon looked out.

He beckoned to Kirk, who instantly rose and went in. The great change was coming. Kirk had never seen any one die, but he knew at once what the look on the face meant. He kneeled, and the woman feebly opened her eyes. He took the hand and prayed again, and knew that she heard and understood.

"We'll see that your baby is cared for," said Kirk very gently. "He's a fine boy, and we are going to pray that he may grow into a noble Christian man. You don't have any fear to go, do you? We have talked about that. You can trust the love of Jesus? You know He has prepared a place for you?"

She could not speak, but they all knew she understood. As the storm rose and the vessel began to pitch and toss under the resistless grasp of the heaving hand of the tempest under it, the woman neared her harbour of peace. And she entered it gently, just as the grey dawn was creeping over the water, now lashed into great sheets of spray that went clear over the decks and fell in torrents on the hatchways.

A death on board ship in mid-ocean is soon known by all the passengers. Before noon every one knew that there was an orphan baby in the intermediate cabin. The storm increased as the day wore on. Nearly every one was sick. One after another

of the women in the cabins gave up the struggle and retired.

This was what led to an unexpected experience for Malcom Kirk. The baby woke up, and for the first time there was no one to take care of him. The three women stewards were busy with their duties, and one of them, who had prepared the baby's milk, suddenly came up to Kirk, who was standing by the long dining table, and asked him if he couldn't take the baby awhile.

"I don't know what we'll do," she said, in great perplexity. "The women are all sick, and we have our hands full caring for them. You can hold him all right, can't you? He's the best baby you ever saw."

By this time the baby had developed a good, healthy cry that could be easily heard through the roar of the storm. Kirk looked doubtfully at the stewardess.

"I'm afraid I'll drop him," he said.

"Drop him! A great strong man like you!" said the woman, who Kirk was sure was laughing a little at his hesitation. "He'll be all right as soon as he has some dinner, poor fellow."

"Well, bring him here, then!" said Kirk desperately. And the woman quickly brought out the baby and placed him in Kirk's long arms.

If the few passengers still in the dining room had not been so miserable from approaching seasickness, they certainly would have laughed at the sight of

Malcom Kirk holding that baby. He really tried to be as gentle with it as its own mother ever was, but it seemed to him that he sprawled all over the cabin in his efforts to keep the baby where the woman said he ought to be.

But the tremendous storm was partly to blame for that. Kirk braced his feet against the legs of the table and held on to the baby as if it was a life preserver. The milk in the bottle was first in one end of it, and then in the other. Every time the baby missed getting it he cried with a vigour that made Kirk afraid he would burst a blood vessel or rupture his lungs. Finally, however, matters were adjusted so that the baby's hunger was satisfied, and he dropped asleep in Kirk's arms. Kirk was so afraid to carry him over to the cabin where he had been kept, that he held him for nearly an hour. The storm howled over the vessel, and there was a remarkable confusion of all sorts of noises in every part of the steamer. Kirk noticed, however, that the stewards and one or two officers who happened to pass through the cabin were unconcerned. "It will blow itself out before morning," was the statement of the surgeon who came down in a lull of the tempest.

He laughed at the sight of Kirk and the baby. But, being a man with a baby of his own at home in Liverpool, there was also a little moisture about his eyes that was not caused by the ocean spray.

"You'll do, man," he said. "And the boy will

make a fine sailor. He sleeps through the storm as if he were used to being 'rocked in the cradle of the deep.' But we must be after looking up the other woman when we get across."

"Yes, yes," said Kirk eagerly. He had a long talk with the surgeon, and next morning, after the storm had subsided, and they had gone out to breathe the fine salt air, Kirk had no difficulty in persuading the surgeon to keep the body of the mother and help, in some way, to get it to the sister in London.

"Ay, ay, we'll arrange it all right. The company will see to that. But the expense of the rest, man; can't you see to it that the passengers do something for the baby to give him a start in life?"

"I had already thought of it," said Kirk, and the fact revealed one of his great qualifications for the ministry. "I'll go up on the other deck and see the first cabin passengers about it."

The surgeon was a Scotch Irishman, with a big heart. He had influence with the purser, and easily persuaded that gentleman to call the passengers together in the dining and music rooms, which joined, and then suggested that Kirk himself take the baby and go up and tell his story and appeal for help.

This time Malcom Kirk required no urging to have the baby placed in his arms. He would have gone with it into the presence of all the crowned heads of Europe and their families, even although he knew well enough that he looked and felt as queer

as a long-legged, long-armed, awkward man ever looked and felt.

The women wrapped the baby up, and he smiled when Kirk's hands clutched him.

"He doesn't care how homely and awkward I am, any way," said Kirk to himself, with a gulp in his throat. He climbed up the rather steep stairs out on to the lower deck. The storm was almost spent. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon, and when he reached the promenade deck he met the purser himself, who led the way into the dining saloon.

The first cabin passengers of that steamer will never forget that incident in their passage. They had gathered to the number of a hundred or more, many of them old travellers who were not affected by storms. They had been told that the orphan baby's friends below wanted to tell his story, and they were ready to listen to it, but they were not prepared for the sight of the baby himself and his strange nurse.

CHAPTER IV.



RALEIGH SKETCHES MALCOM AND THE BABY.

SMILE crossed nearly every face as Kirk entered. As he began to speak, the smile passed off, and another look crept over the faces of the rich, refined, leisurely people gathered in that steamer.

The first cabin drew very near the intermediate for a few moments at least. Kirk told the baby's story very well. How could he help it when he saw, in his imagination, the face of that worn-out mother lying nearly beneath where he stood, still and cold. The baby looked out from its shawls with a curious inquisitive look on its face and kept perfectly quiet as long as Kirk was speaking.

"It seems to me," Kirk concluded, "that we might help the baby to start in life. I understand that the mother left only a few dollars, and the sister in London is a shopkeeper in poor circumstances. If I were in a church I think I would say, 'We will now worship the Lord with our offering.'"

He said it in such a tone that it was irresistible. A portly, dignified old gentleman sitting in the middle of the dining room rose, and in a husky voice which betrayed his feeling said: "I'll be one of twenty-five gentlemen to give ten dollars."

Instantly more than a dozen men arose, followed in a moment by a dozen more. Some one in the music room began to pass a hat. Money was thrown into it until it was half full. Under the inspiration of the moment one of the young ladies suggested a concert and literary entertainment, to be given the next night, and the suggestion was taken up at once. One of the men offered to take charge of the funds and help Kirk or some one to see that they were properly placed, and Kirk started to go out. The ladies had crowded around the baby, caressing him as he never had been caressed before, in all his meagre, pitiful life.

It was at this moment that Kirk saw Francis Raleigh. He had come out of the music room, and the minute he saw Kirk he came to him and held out his hand.

"Mr. Kirk, isn't it? I heard you at Hermon a few weeks ago. At commencement. You remember me? We have met once or twice. Raleigh is my name."

"Yes, I remember," said Kirk. He had met Raleigh at some receptions. "Excuse me for not shaking hands. Mine are full just now."

"Excuse me, I see they are," said Raleigh, laugh-

ing. "You did that very well." He spoke very kindly, but in a tone that he did not mean to be patronising. It was only the Raleigh manner. It belonged to the family. He might have spoken differently if he had known that in the upper vest pocket of the homely figure before him was the lovely face of Dorothy Gilbert. But there was this fact about the situation. Kirk knew that Raleigh was in love with Dorothy. Raleigh did not know that Kirk loved her, or that he had ever thought of such a possibility.

"I am glad for the baby's sake," replied Kirk soberly. He ignored the compliment, and finally succeeded in getting down to the lower deck again.

The intermediate cabin was excited over the result. Nearly five hundred dollars had been contributed, and the concert would bring a hundred more. In fact, when the concert was over and all of the first cabin had been solicited, nearly eight hundred dollars were given for the baby's start in life.

When the vessel reached Liverpool, Kirk, with the help of the surgeon and one of the cabin passengers, secured a nurse for the baby and arranged with one of the women who had cared for the mother in the intermediate to go down to London and see the baby safe in its home there. Kirk himself had the sad pleasure of meeting the sister, and while he was in London doing his special work of study in the East End he secured lodging near by and often went to see the family. He grew wonder-

fully attached to the child, and when he was obliged to leave and pursue his studies on the Continent, he parted from the baby with genuine sorrow. He supposed at the time that this little chapter in his life was closed and completed. It was one of the future events that no man can foresee that opened to him afterwards a continuation of that human affection. For he was unable to return to London again, and when he said good-bye he had no dream of ever seeing that part of his life return.

It was two weeks after the steamer reached Liverpool, and while Kirk was working hard in the East End slums, that Dorothy Gilbert received a letter from Francis Raleigh, dated from London, Gordon Square, near the British Museum. She had not encouraged him when he pleaded the privilege of an occasional letter, but on the other hand she had not refused him, and he was too careful of his future to risk the mistake of writing too often or in a tone of sentiment. He wrote a very interesting letter. Dorothy enjoyed reading it, while she felt a little disturbed to think she must answer. She did not want to encourage him too much. At the same time his undoubted love for her and his great talents as an artist appealed to her strongly. The only reason she had not accepted his affection was a lack of feeling on her own part. She was fearful of herself. She wanted to be absolutely sure of her own heart. She had known him since they were both children. It was not as if they were in any way comparative

strangers. She also knew well enough that her father favoured Raleigh's suit.

There was one passage in the letter that intensely interested her. It might not have pleased Francis Raleigh if he had known all the reasons for her interest. It was a passage describing a scene on the vessel during his recent voyage across.

"You may remember," the letter went on after a description of some famous paintings in the National Gallery, "a theological student by the name of Malcom Kirk who graduated this year. Had an unusually good voice for a divinity student, and received the German scholarship at graduation. You would remember him, if for no other reason, on account of his almost phenomenal awkwardness. Well, he was on the *Cephalonia* coming across, and I fell in with him, and had several interesting talks with him." Dorothy looked up from her reading, and the colour deepened in her face as she pictured the two men together. "I found him a very intelligent fellow and, to tell the truth, not at all like the typical divinity student. There was a somewhat tragical affair in the intermediate department, where Kirk was a passenger. A poor woman, the fifth day out, died of consumption, leaving a six-months-old baby for the passengers to take care of. Kirk got in the habit of holding the baby a good deal, and the last two days of the trip he used to come out on deck and hold the baby there. Once or twice he sat just below the stairs leading up to the promenade deck,

and I had a good chance to get a good sketch of him. I enclose it, thinking you may be interested in a little touch of humour. It is not exaggerated much and I pride myself on having caught Kirk's attitude pretty well. I showed the sketch to him in order to save myself from a feeling that I had possibly done an unfair thing to take him unawares, and he laughed very good naturedly and seemed very much amused, without a particle of resentment. He asked me to let him have the sketch and I drew him another, which he took with evident pleasure. He was a gentleman, and will do some good work in his line, but I should think his general appearance would always stand in the way of his advancement in the ministry."

Dorothy spread the sketch out on the table and looked at it. Raleigh had not said too much when he wrote that he had caught Kirk's attitude very well. It was, besides, a splendid likeness. There was just a little exaggeration to the stubborn brown hair, a little touch of unnecessary grotesqueness to the face, but it was "Malcom Kirk, plain enough," as he used to say of himself. The baby lay in his arms satisfied and smiling. There were tears in Dorothy's eyes after she had looked a little while. Malcom Kirk's great-hearted love of humanity as it was represented by that helpless bit of it in his long arms somehow appealed to her. She seemed to feel as if there was a world there into which she had never entered, but which she could enjoy with

all her eager enthusiasm if once she were introduced to it. She folded up the sketch and carefully laid it away by itself. She did not put it with a collection of drawings which Raleigh had given her when he finished his course in art.

Malcom Kirk went over to the Continent and spent the year in France, Italy, Germany, and even two weeks in Russia. How he lived all that time would make a story in itself. He walked a great deal; always lodged in the most inexpensive places. Six months after he had been away from home he sent to the president of the Seminary a written report of what he had been doing. It was so remarkable in many ways that the president showed it to Mr. Gilbert. The Boston publisher urged its publication. The president wrote that the Seminary would assume the expense of publication, and Mr. Gilbert's house printed the report in a neat pamphlet that at once attracted attention.

The night of the first issue of the pamphlet Mr. Gilbert brought a copy of it home.

"By the way, Dorothy, you remember that divinity student who took the German scholarship—Kirk?"

"Yes," murmured Dorothy demurely. If Dorothy's mother had been living it is possible she might have told her about Kirk's declaration. Her father was another person. Besides, he had not asked her to be his wife. He had only told her very bluntly that he loved her. That was in one sense his secret to be kept for him from others.

"Well, here's a bit of work he's been doing abroad. We brought it out to-day. Knowing you have always been interested in this work, I thought you might like to look this over."

Her father spoke with his usual precise calmness, and left the pamphlet on the table. The moment supper was ended, Dorothy seized the report and went to her own room.

She read it through as if it had been a fascinating novel. It was written in a simple style that possessed no merit except its simplicity, but it was a record of how humanity lived, and the pathos, the reality, the fact of how it lived, stirred Dorothy Gilbert as her mind and heart had never been stirred. And all through the reading she seemed to see Malcom Kirk with that baby in his arms. She knew that if that sketch had been put in as a frontispiece it would have exactly expressed the contents of the pamphlet. She rose and walked her room strangely excited. Who was this man to stir her feelings so deeply? Francis Raleigh had never been able to do it. No man, for that matter. All the other men she knew were busy trying to have a good time or win fame or make money. This man was interested in people. He wanted the world to know and feel for humanity. He was unlike the others. Besides, he loved her. He had her picture. She glowed at the thought. For the first time in her life she trembled at the thought of being loved.

A few days later she read the report again,

People in Hermon were talking about it. It had actually stirred the life of the village in some ways. Dorothy placed the sketch of Kirk in the pamphlet and put them away in her desk.

Malcom Kirk finished his year and took passage on one of the French steamers for New York. He had used his money well, but he had so little at the end of the year that he took steerage passage. That was one degree lower than the intermediate, and he smiled a little grimly to himself as he crowded into his noisy, close quarters with French peasants and a colony of Mennonite emigrants. However, it was literally true that he loved people, regardless of their condition, and to many a simple, ignorant soul in the steerage, the American clergyman, who somehow was strangely there, became, during the nine days' voyage, a friend and companion from whom they parted with real regret and with loving memory.

He started at once for Hermon. He would have nearly two weeks there to write out his report for the Seminary. Then for his Home Missionary field in Kansas. And Dorothy Gilbert? He had not heard except indirectly anything of her. Once in Berlin he had chanced to meet one of the Hermon professors who was taking his vacation. From him he had learned that the Gilberts had been spending the summer at the home of Dorothy's aunt in Beverley, and were expected home early in the autumn. He wondered if he should see her before he was obliged to go west. The superintendent had written him that

the church would be ready for him in September. He took out the miniature. He would be obliged to give it back. Would he? But what possible alternative could there be! He still loved Dorothy Gilbert. Somehow he felt as if she would be a part of his future as she had been of his past.

He reached Boston in the morning, and took the first train for Hermon. He bought a paper as he entered the train, and as it was moving out of the station he began to read. Among the first items that caught his eye was this :

“The publishing firm of Sydney, Gilbert & Co. assigned yesterday. The company was involved in the recent syndicate failure in the book business. Mr. Gilbert's loss is heavy. It is thought he saved little, if anything, from the failure.”

It was simply one item out of a score of others stated in a cold, newspaper style without comment. But it made Malcom Kirk tremble all over. What effect would this have on Dorothy Gilbert? If he, Malcom Kirk, was poor, and Dorothy Gilbert was now somewhat nearer him in condition, what of his love for her now?

He reached Hermon, and went at once to the president's house. The president had not come home from his vacation, but was expected the next day. Dorothy and her father were still out of town. He learned that they might return that week. He

looked up the steward of the building and secured the key to his old room, where he had been allowed to keep his few books and pieces of furniture until he returned. The room was not very desirable, and had not been occupied by any of the new students.

He went in, and opened his curtains and sat down. There across the familiar campus was Dorothy Gilbert's house. He sat there thinking deeply about his future. Then he took out the miniature, and laid it lovingly in his great brown palm.

CHAPTER V.

MALCOM ATTEMPTS TO RETURN THE MINIATURE.



HE next day Malcom Kirk doggedly set to work on his report. In the evening he went over to see the president, and consulted with him as to certain details, and then for the next three days he gave himself up to his task of getting together the great mass of material he had accumulated while abroad.

It was on the fourth evening of his return that he saw the lights in the Gilbert house across the campus, as evening set in. The house had been shut up and dark.

"She is home again," was his first thought. He was unable to work well that evening. The next day he continued, but the evident nearness of Dorothy made him restless to see her. Once she came out on the porch, and he readily recognised her, even at that distance.

That evening he did not pretend to himself that he could do anything worth doing on his report, and

resolved to go and return the miniature without waiting any longer. He had kept it more than a year now. He was under promise to give it back. As well now as any time.

He rang the bell with a tremor at heart that instantly bounded into fever when Dorothy herself opened the door.

He stood there in the light of the porch, and his trepidation did not hinder his observing that Dorothy looked very pale and even as if she had been crying.

"Won't you come in, Mr. Kirk? I am very glad to see you," said Dorothy. She spoke so easily, so kindly, that he recovered his self-possession at once, and went into the parlour and sat down, wondering at the common-place details of his meeting with the one woman in all the world to him.

"You will excuse me for coming so soon after your return?" he said simply.

"Certainly," replied Dorothy smiling. "Would you like to see father?"

"No," said Malcom Kirk. "I came to see you." It was so evidently true, that Dorothy could say nothing for a moment. There was an awkward silence. She broke it by saying:

"I have read your pamphlet describing the life of the people on the Continent in the cities. I thank you, not for the pleasure, but for the pain it gave me."

He looked at her gratefully. He understood exactly what she meant. The opening had been made for talk along the lines of his deepest life, and

before he knew just how it had been brought about, he was telling her some of the experiences of his year abroad, things he had told to no one else, and had not even been able to put into his report. All the time he felt the miniature in his pocket. But he seemed to fight against the knowledge that he must give it up.

As for Dorothy, she experienced a feeling of exhilaration in her talk with this man. She was sick of the empty nothings she had been hearing all the summer. The recent experience of her father's failure also had excited her. There was much in everything that pervaded Malcom Kirk's life-work to attract her at the present moment.

It must have been nearly an hour that they had been talking, she asking questions and he replying, and every minute grew increasingly full of interest to her, when he suddenly stopped as he had done that evening a year before and asked: "Would you—do you feel as if you could play something?"

He was simply battling for time, and he was in a condition where he could not run the risk of speaking something he ought not. The longer he stayed, the deeper he knew his heart longed for Dorothy Gilbert. He felt that while she was playing he might measure his duty and his inclination better.

She was never able to tell herself why she played as she did. She began with the old German Lorelei, "Ich weiss nicht was soll es bedeuten das Ich so traurig bin," "I know not how it is that I am so sad," and then before she could control her fingers or her

thought, she had passed on to the Traumerel, which Kirk had asked her to play before.

When she finished, she hardly knew her own feelings. When she turned about he was standing, and he had the miniature in his hand.

"I promised to return it when I came back." He spoke with great simplicity and, as his fashion always was, looked straight in her face like a man who is not ashamed or afraid. "No one but myself has seen it. The keeping of it has not——"

He hardly dared to trust himself to say what lay within his heart. In truth he knew well enough that he would be a far different man for the rest of his days if he could only have this woman for his wife, but at that moment he felt as if such a possibility was too remote for even thought.

He had walked to the mantel, and was about to put the miniature down in the place where it had been, when a sound in the library startled them both. It was a sound as of some one falling heavily.

"Father!" Dorothy exclaimed in terror. She ran into the hall, but swift as she was, Malcom Kirk was before her. Even as he leaped forward he was conscious that he held the miniature still, and before he reached the library he had mechanically put it into its old resting-place in his pocket.

They found Mr. Gilbert lying on the floor unconscious. Dorothy kneeled on one side of the body, Malcom Kirk on the other, and for a moment there was a wild fear in Dorothy's heart that her

father had in some way killed himself. His business failure had been the great humiliation of his life.

Kirk put her mind at rest.

"He has had a shock or stroke of some kind." He lifted the body up, placed it on the lounge, and instantly ran out of the house for the doctor, who lived only a few doors away.

When he came he pronounced the case serious, but gave Dorothy hope. Malcom Kirk came back, but in the excitement he could do nothing but express his sympathy and finally go back to his room, after the president's wife and some others had come in to stay with Dorothy for the night.

Mr. Gilbert had been a typical New England business man of the old school. When his failure came and he had begun to recover from the first effects of the blow, he had no thought of any other course but to pay dollar for dollar of his honest indebtedness. To do it meant the loss of his beautiful home in Hermon. Dorothy felt as he did about it. He had no fears on her score. The integrity and firmness of such a moral course were never in question with either of them. So he had come back from where he had been staying with his sister, and the night Kirk called he was busy in his library arranging the business of the Hermon property, going over all the details of his recent loss, and making what provision he could for the future. He was nearly fifty-five, still, as he supposed, in the prime of life, and he manfully determined to begin all over again. He could leave

Dorothy with her aunt, who was alone much of the time, and needed her at present, and himself struggle into place again with honour untarnished and the good name of the firm free from commercial stain.

So the honest, sturdy publisher thought as he sat at his desk with his papers before him. Then, suddenly, just a little after Dorothy had ceased to play, he felt a new and awful pain seize him, he reeled in his chair, vainly tried to call out for help, and sank unconscious to the floor.

The next few days were days of great anxiety to Malcom Kirk. He could see the doctor's carriage before the Gilbert house every morning. One morning he saw the doctor go up the steps with another man, who entered with him. The doctor's carriage remained in front of the house that day until noon. In the afternoon Kirk called to inquire, and the servant came out at the back porch and told him Mr. Gilbert had been sinking rapidly. A celebrated physician from Boston had been in consultation, and he said there was little hope.

Kirk passed an almost sleepless night, and next morning as he looked across the campus he knew that the woman he loved best was alone with her grief. He could see the wreath of flowers on the door, and it told him at once that John Gilbert had passed on, never more to be vexed with the struggle of the life that now is on the earth.

The week following was one of the most trying

that Malcom Kirk ever knew. The funeral of John Gilbert was held in the Seminary chapel, and attended by the professors and townspeople generally. Dorothy's aunt was with her. Kirk had no opportunity to see Dorothy and be to her the comfort he longed to be. It was agony to him, after the funeral was over, to think that there across the campus in the great house was the woman he loved passing through a great sorrow, and he had no right to go to her and share that sorrow with her. He felt as if he could not break in on her grief to speak even of his love. So the days passed restlessly for him, and he tried to work on his report, but made very little real progress. He laid the miniature on his table and tried to write with the face looking up at him, but he made no progress at all then, and the close of the week found him walking his room in great uncertainty of heart and mind.

On Monday, the week following, he was obliged to go down to Boston to consult some authorities in Settlement work, and when he came back the next day, the Gilbert house was closed, and Dorothy and her aunt had gone to Beverley.

It was the very next day that Kirk saw in a Boston paper the name of Francis Raleigh, arrived a few days before from Liverpool, on the *Cephalonia*. Looking over the columns a little further down, he saw in the local news from Beverley, this statement :

“ Mr. Francis Raleigh, the Hermon artist, recently

arrived from a year's study abroad, is the guest of Mrs. Arthur Penrose, sister of the late John Gilbert."

That was all, but it roused Malcom Kirk to instant action. He knew with all the vigour and intensity of his deep, honest nature that his love for Dorothy Gilbert was now the largest part of his life. He had consecrated his time and strength to the ministry. He did not deceive himself. He knew what such a consecration meant. He faced, open-eyed, the entire meaning of a minister's career in a Home Missionary church "out west."

But looking at it all through dispassionate eyes, he said as he walked his study: "She must choose between him and me. I cannot go to my work without speaking to her. My love for her is honest and true, and if God grant that she can love me and share my life with me——"

He left the rest unspoken, and going back to his desk he sat down, trembling a little, as he put his face in his hands and prayed that the hunger of his heart might be satisfied. He had made up his mind to act, and act quickly, and once he had decided on his course he was free from all doubt as to its wisdom.

He took the afternoon train for Beverley, and reached the place before dusk. Mrs. Penrose lived in one of the handsome summer villas near the sea. The whole place smote Kirk as with a blow aimed at his poverty, his obscurity, his whole future. And

yet he said to himself as he walked up the steps that there was something in his life which money and all its attendant elegance could not buy, and he believed that Dorothy Gilbert somehow, if she ever loved any one enough, would feel the same way towards all the outward display of wealth.

The servant who came in answer to his ring said that Miss Gilbert had gone out for a walk, and had not yet returned. He at once asked for Mrs. Penrose. When she came in where Kirk was standing, in the reception room, she surprised him by greeting him very warmly by name. He had merely met her at the time of Mr. Gilbert's illness, but not more than once or twice, and then very briefly.

She was a woman of great tact, and she made Kirk feel at ease. She had not the remotest idea that he was in love with Dorothy, or what was the object of his call, and in a few minutes, seeing this, he made up his mind what to do.

"Dorothy is down by the beach with Mr. Raleigh. They will be back for tea. You have met him, Mr. Kirk? I should be pleased to have you stay and take tea with us."

"Thank you. I shall be glad to do so," replied Malcom Kirk promptly. All the while he was fast arriving at a determination to tell Mrs. Penrose what he had come for.

"I believe you met Mr. Raleigh while you were abroad? He was telling us something about you this morning."

"Was he?" said Malcom Kirk quietly "Yes, I met him on the *Cephalonia* going over. We had several little visits together. I enjoyed them."

Mrs. Penrose was sitting where she could see, from the reception-room window, the stretch of beach. She looked out and said: "I don't see them coming yet. They will be here soon, I think. You were saying, Mr. Kirk, that you enjoyed meeting Raleigh. Excuse me if I say that he spoke in warmest terms of you. He told us about your care of that poor baby. He wondered what became of it afterwards."

"It's quite a long story," said Kirk, "but pardon me, Mrs. Penrose, if I don't try to tell it now. I want to tell you why I am here. I love your niece, and I am going to ask her to be my wife."

CHAPTER VI.

"WHOM GOD HATH JOINED TOGETHER,
LET NO MAN PUT ASUNDER."



HE had come directly to his subject, feeling that it was best so. Mrs. Penrose looked at him in the greatest astonishment.

"You—love—Dorothy?" she said slowly.

"Yes," replied Malcom Kirk, simply. "I have loved her for four years. Ever since I entered the Seminary, in fact."

Mrs. Penrose sat still and looked more keenly at the awkward, homely figure in her reception room. She was a woman of great quickness of perception. To do her justice, she had pre-eminently a large fund of fairness and a sense of justice which came to her through a long line of Pilgrim ancestors. She saw in the man who had just declared his love for her niece so abruptly something more than a common average man. There was a look in his eye that spoke of limitless endurance, and his voice was of an unusual

quality, very nearly if not quite equal to a rare gift of music or art.

She rose and walked over to the window and looked far down the beach. Then she turned towards Malcom Kirk and said with some emphasis :

"What you have so suddenly told me, Mr. Kirk, is, I need not say, a complete surprise to me. I suppose you know that Mr. Raleigh is a lover of Dorothy."

"No more than I am," said Malcom Kirk quickly.

"I suppose you know he is an old friend of the family, and that Mr. Gilbert favoured his suit?"

"That has nothing to do with my love for her," said Malcom Kirk softly.

Mrs. Penrose smiled slightly. Then she frowned and looked somewhat anxiously at him.

"What do you expect to do?" she asked somewhat vaguely.

"I am going to ask Dorothy Gilbert to be my wife."

"If she loves you?" said Mrs. Penrose a little grimly.

"Of course, if she loves me," replied Malcom Kirk simply.

There was a silence in the room. A servant came in quietly and lighted two long candles on the mantel. The dusk and the candle-light blended together softly, and Malcom Kirk looked out of his side of the room at Dorothy's aunt with a somewhat pale face, calm however, and fully self-possessed. Even Francis

Raleigh, with all his inherited instincts towards gentlemanly habits, was not equal to Malcom Kirk during a supreme crisis.

Mrs. Penrose went over to the window again. Then she returned and took a seat nearer Malcom Kirk.

"Of course, after what you have told me, Mr. Kirk, it will be—you see the awkwardness of the situation—it will be embarrassing for you and Mr. Raleigh to meet."

"Why?" asked Malcom Kirk.

"Well, it will, won't it?" she asked in some slight irritation.

"I don't think so. I have nothing to be embarrassed about."

Mrs. Penrose was silent again. After the lapse of a few moments she said:

"I have not asked you what your prospects are, Mr. Kirk? Pardon me if I seem abrupt, but you have set me the example. I am the nearest relative Dorothy has now, since my brother's death. She has been accustomed all her life to the comforts of wealth. To such comforts as these." Her glance swept the room carelessly, but with studied meaning. "May I ask what you can offer Dorothy in case——"

"In case she becomes my wife?" said Malcom Kirk completing the sentence.

"Yes, in case she becomes your wife."

His face had grown a little paler, and the muscles around his mouth had stiffened while Mrs.

Penrose was speaking. But he observed her calmly enough.

"I can offer her a home and comforts. I have a definite position. I do not need to say that I am poor. My life in the Home Missionary field to which I am going will be full of hardships. My wife would share them with me. I ought, perhaps, to say"—he spoke with the first hesitation he had yet shown—"that I have a possible source of income in my pen. I expect to earn as much as my salary by that means. I have once or twice done that during my college and seminary course."

"So that the most you can offer my niece would be twelve or fifteen hundred a year?" asked Mrs. Penrose with the nearest approach to sharpness.

"By no means, madam!" said Malcom Kirk, and his face glowed with the eloquence of his answer. "That is not the most I can offer her. The most I can offer is the love I bear her, and all the money in the world without that would be very little to offer."

"He's right about that." Mrs. Penrose spoke to herself softly. Malcom Kirk did not hear what she said, but then, at that time he did not know her history nor the inner emptiness of her unloved married life.

There was silence again in the room. The two candles on the mantel were distinct and clear now as the dusk had slowly deepened.

A step came up the path and the door opened.

Mrs. Penrose and Malcom Kirk both rose as Dorothy entered the reception room alone.

She came in with her head erect, and there was light enough for her aunt and Malcom Kirk to see in her face the tokens of some recent excitement.

"Where is Francis?" Mrs. Penrose asked.

"He is not coming back to-night," replied Dorothy softly, and then for the first time she saw Malcom Kirk standing there by the fireplace.

She took an eager step towards him, and then suddenly stopped, while her face glowed rosy red in the candle-light. As for Malcom Kirk, he stood very erect and still, but out of his eyes shone the lover's look as he faced the woman of his heart's longing. He did not try to conceal it, and Dorothy knew as well as if he had spoken it aloud that he said: "I love you, Dorothy Gilbert, and I cannot do my life-work best without you." Mrs. Penrose saw that look, also, and respected it.

The servant entered and announced that tea was ready, and Malcom Kirk found himself shaking hands with Dorothy and saying some very common thing about being glad to meet her. A few minutes later he found himself at the table with Dorothy and her aunt. He ate and talked at first with a repressed excitement that gradually became a source of eloquent conversation. No one asked **any** more questions about Francis Raleigh. It is certain that Mrs. Penrose and Malcom Kirk understood that he had

pleaded his suit again with Dorothy, and had again been unsuccessful.

"She has given him his answer," said Malcom Kirk to himself, and there was the first positive hope in his heart that he had dared to feel. He had never appeared to such good advantage. Mrs. Penrose, experienced as she was in the ways of society and familiar with some of the most brilliant men and women, felt a positive charm in Kirk's voice and manner. His awkwardness for a while was subordinate to his higher gifts.

Mr. Penrose was in New York on business. Malcom Kirk learned afterwards some things in his history, and why John Gilbert had been allowed to meet his great financial losses without help from his own sister, who, to a large extent, had been powerless to persuade her husband to come to her brother's aid. But he was absorbed to-night in the thought of Dorothy. He knew that a crisis in his life had come.

After tea they went into the reception-room again. Mrs. Penrose stayed for half an hour, and then suddenly went out, and Dorothy and Malcom Kirk were left alone.

He was fully aware that the whole future of his life-work would be shaped by the events of the next few minutes, but he had never felt more a Christian than now. There was a positive religious excitement of the highest, purest, noblest character in all the thought of his love for Dorothy. There always had been. He felt that it was no cheap, or silly, or

shallow sentiment that moved him to think of her as of no other being in the world. There had not been a night of his life since he began to love her, when he had failed to speak her name in a prayer. He knew that his Christian faith was sanctified and beautified by this human love.

He rose and went over near her. He had the miniature in his hand. When he spoke it was in great simplicity, but in great directness.

"You know what I have come for. You know that I love you wholly. You know what my life will be. You know that I am poor. Dorothy, can you share such a life with me? Must I give this back, or may I keep it always?"

She was sitting with her face partly in shadow, and she slowly rose and turned and faced him. Like all girls who dream of lovers, she had her dreams, her ideals, her imaginings. She looked up at him now, and the blood rushed impetuously through him as he saw the beginning of her answer. She had learned to love him during his absence abroad, during her recent sorrow, during the days that followed her bereavement. It was not so sudden as it might seem, for Dorothy had learned when Raleigh spoke to her that afternoon that the greatest reason why she could not love him was because she already loved Malcom Kirk. So she gave him then and there what he asked. Ah, Malcom Kirk, not this side of heaven will you know the power of that flood that lifted your heart and all it contained when you first heard the woman

you loved say, as she lifted her face to yours, "Yes, I will share your life with you. Yes, I love you."

Two hours later Malcom Kirk went out into the starry night and down on the sea beach, and with the freshness of the sea breeze blowing about his uncovered head, he thanked God for the precious, priceless gift of this woman's heart. They had had much to say, as true lovers always have. Always they had come back to the undying theme of their love for each other. "She loves me!" he kept saying to himself. And the waves, and the night wind, and the stars, and the harbour lights, and the pines near the beach all joined in the same song. He walked up and down the sands until the early morning. He found his face wet once with tears. He ran across a long strip of beach exultant, and waked from one of his reveries to find himself knee deep in water, for the tide was coming in, and he knew nothing of tides, only of the one that had risen in his own spirit.

But he drew back out of the water, laughing, and finally found his way to the inn down by the pier, where he had breakfast. But what he ate, or whether he ate anything, was probably unknown to him, at least he was not able to give Dorothy satisfactory answers when he came back to the house.

His dream was a reality. She met him with the look on her face that was never to die out of it as long as he lived, and together they went in to see Mrs. Penrose.

Dorothy's aunt was somewhat perplexed, and, to

tell the truth, a good deal astonished at the events of the last twenty-four hours. Dorothy had told her all, and there was no question in Mrs. Penrose's mind that the daughter of John Gilbert had made her definite glad choice of this awkward, unhandsome, poor young minister as her future husband. She could not deny that the young man was a gentleman. Also that he had very superior qualities of mind and heart. But the fact remained that he had no prospects except his Home Missionary field and a somewhat uncertain income from occasional writings.

When she pictured Dorothy in a house built of mud, or a shanty, in that vague, wild, uncouth place called "out west," living in a parish of plain, uncultured people, such as she placidly took for granted lived on the prairies, Mrs. Penrose felt as if Dorothy's strange choice was the strangest thing she ever knew.

"And yet she loves him truly," she said to herself, as Dorothy and Malcom Kirk came in that morning, both of them glorified by the greatest thing in all the world. Dorothy had never looked so beautiful. Kirk had never felt so like a giant in possibility.

Dorothy had anticipated remonstrances and opposition from her aunt. She was surprised and gratified to find how calmly Mrs. Penrose accepted the matter. Even when Malcom Kirk expressed his wish, gravely but with firmness, that they might be married at once and go together to the new parish to begin their life together, Mrs. Penrose offered no decided objection.

"You are neither of you children," she finally said to Dorothy with a sad smile. "You know your own minds by this time. I want you to be married here in this house, of course. It seems very sudden. But I don't blame Mr. Kirk."

"Of course not," said Malcom Kirk decidedly, as he looked Dorothy in the face.

So it came about that a month later the president of the Seminary faculty came down to Beverley one morning, and Dorothy and Malcom Kirk were married in the presence of a very few of Dorothy's Hermon friends and two of Kirk's classmates, who had been settled over parishes near Boston. Kirk had made all his preparations for leaving. A few days before he was married, the president of the faculty had surprised him with the announcement that the sales of his pamphlet had been set aside by the publishers for the benefit of the Seminary, but by unanimous consent the entire amount, something over two hundred dollars, was now at Kirk's disposal. Malcom Kirk was not going to be a penniless bridegroom in any case. He had already received since his return from abroad several cheques for writing he had done during his last year in the Seminary and while in London. So he was able to start towards the new home with much courage and the knowledge that Dorothy would not miss too many of the old luxuries.

But Dorothy, once she had given her heart to Malcom Kirk, and said to him that she would share

his life, entered upon a new and contented experience, such as in all her luxurious life she had never before felt. It is perfectly true that she loved him without condition. She put her hand in his with the trustful confidence of a child, and it is no exaggeration to say that she would have been happy with him anywhere, rich or poor, famous or obscure, successful or defeated.

The train whirled them on into the west, into the land of the prairies, into the land of new things, of those vague possibilities that always go with an untried community. And Dorothy every moment felt more and more content. Malcom Kirk satisfied her ideals. His noble nature was continually revealing to her new phases of his Christian purpose. He had enthusiasm, and he was the only man who had ever been able to kindle hers. The thought that they were to work together filled her with a heavenly delight. She rejoiced in his strength, his manhood, his inward life.

As for Malcom Kirk, he was transformed by all that he now possessed. His poor Home Missionary church became to his thought a gigantic engine of power, with this glorious woman now his wife, who was to be by his side henceforth. He trembled at the extent of such a love, and consecrated it every moment to the infinite eternal life that belongs both to this world and to that which is to come.

They reached their journey's end at the close of a day, and entered the town by night. There was quite a little gathering at the station, curious to see

the new minister and his wife, and the superintendent himself, who happened that week to be in that part of the state, was present to welcome them and introduce them to a little handful of their parishioners.

There was a parsonage, a furnished house of five rooms, close by the church. A supper was ready for them. A little company came in afterwards to greet them, and the people seemed to be truly glad to see them. The sight of Dorothy's beauty astonished them all. She was a little amused at the evident look of disappointment with which every one first saw her husband.

"When they know him, they will love him," she said to herself with unfaltering trust in his victory over them.

She came out to the porch with him after all the members had gone away, and together they tried to get some idea of the place which was to be their home. The night was starlight, and the prairie vastness impressive to them. They had never either of them lived outside of a hill country.

"How large did you say the town was, Malcom?"

"About fifteen hundred people, so the superintendent says."

"How many church members are there?"

"Fifty-seven on the roll. About forty living here."

"Can't we go over and look into the church? I am curious to see it," said Dorothy. She spoke in such a glad, happy voice that Malcom Kirk, as he

stood there with his arm about her, said, "You are happy, little woman, aren't you?"

"Can you ask?" she replied, and he was satisfied. One of the trustees had left a church key with him. They walked across the parsonage yard, taking a lamp from the house with them, and together they went in.

It was a small room with seats for about one hundred and fifty. A small class room was in the rear and a choir railing in front of the organ, which was in a little recess at one side of the platform.

Malcom Kirk set the lamp down on the pulpit and with his wife stood looking over the room.

"My dear," said Dorothy, nestling up close to him, "do you think we two can help to 'bring in the kingdom,' as you say, into this town?"

Malcom Kirk looked at the room, at his pulpit where he was to preach, and at his wife, and he fully understood what Dorothy meant.

"Do you mean that we will see how much two people can do to make heaven on earth for fifteen hundred other people?"

"Yes, and whether in our lifetime we can redeem whatever is evil here and give it back to God."

"We will do it by His grace," replied Malcom Kirk gravely. It seemed to him almost as if they two, there in their little church, had made a solemn promise to redeem the souls of all the lost in Conrad. They passed out of the church with the same feeling deep in their souls.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ANGEL OF DEATH.



EARLY three years after Malcom Kirk and his wife had made their promise in the little Home Missionary church of Conrad, one evening in September, a stranger stepped out of the east-bound Chicago express, upon the platform at Conrad, and inquired for the residence of the Rev. Malcom Kirk.

"He lives up by the church," said the man to whom the question was put. "Come out to the end of the platform, and I'll show you."

The stranger followed, and the man pointed up the street where the tower of the little church could be seen.

"You'll find him in the parsonage close by, at the right of the church."

The stranger thanked him, and started down the platform steps, when the man called after him.

"They're having trouble at the minister's house. I thought if you didn't know I ought to tell you. They have a very sick baby there."

The stranger paused, and looked uncertainly at the man.

"I won't go there, then, if I ought not. I am one of Mr. Kirk's old Seminary classmates. I stopped on my way home from Colorado, where I have been taking my vacation. Perhaps I had better not call there to-night. I didn't know of his trouble. Do you know how sick the baby is?"

"No. It's serious. The doctor has been there nearly all day."

The stranger hesitated, and finally moved on towards the parsonage.

"I will simply stop and inquire at the house, and then go to the hotel," he said to himself.

When he knocked at the little parsonage, Dorothy herself opened the door.

"This is Mrs. Kirk? I am Mr. Wilson, one of Mr. Kirk's classmates at Hermon. You remember me? I was on my way from Colorado, and stopped to see him. I only just heard of the illness of your baby. I——"

"Come in, Mr. Wilson, I know Malcom will want to see you," she said, and he entered with some reluctance to intrude at such a time, but her manner assured him that his presence was grateful to them.

Three years had made some changes in Dorothy. She was very beautiful still, and there was something more in the face which God's children always have after trial and suffering have purged the life within. Wilson noted in a glance the simple furnishings of the room, the unmistakable sign of economy.

He was struck, also, with the profound atmosphere

of the first great trouble that had come into this woman's home. It was so positive that he felt unable to say anything commonplace by way of sympathy.

In the next room, Malcom Kirk was walking up and down with his baby in his arms. The day had been very hot, and the upper chambers of the little house were stifling.

The Rev. George Wilson will never forget that sight on this side of the deathless paradise which all the redeemed shall some time enjoy. When Malcom Kirk turned and came towards the door where his wife and Wilson were standing, his classmate saw on his face a look of suffering which the strong, homely, marked features emphasised.

For three weeks he had hardly closed his eyes.

He had prayed, his wife beside him, every night, on his knees by the little crib, that their first-born son might be spared to them. But to-night, as the baby lay in his arms, he knew that the loving Father had some great reason unknown to them for taking to Himself this bit of humanity that for a few months had made the little parsonage on the prairie the very garden spot of all the world to them.

Dorothy, without a word, took the baby from her husband, and he, without a word, clasped his old classmate's hand, and the men stood there a moment praying.

"It's you, George?" said Kirk. "It seems good to see your face. We——"

Malcom Kirk sat down and buried his face in his

great hands and sobbed. It was the first time he had broken down in the presence of Dorothy. The sight of his old classmate had revived his Hermon memories. He saw again the old campus, its great avenues of elms, the noble landscape of hills and woods, Dorothy's home across the campus, his own dingy little room, his love for the woman who now was sharing this great trouble with him. And he cried, without attempt at concealment. For his heart was sore at the coming loss of the baby out of a home where God Himself had blessed the love of man and wife as rarely in human lives it has been blessed.

Finally he lifted up his face and spoke calmly.

"We've hoped all along, of course, but the long-continued heat has been against his recovery. It's hard to part with the little fellow. See"—Malcom Kirk rose and took the baby again from his wife, while Dorothy sat down near the table and laid her beautiful head on her arms, but still she was without a tear—"see, the little fellow smiles at me still."

The baby opened his eyes, looked up into Malcom Kirk's gaunt agonised countenance, and a faint light went over its face.

"Malcom, oh Malcom!" cried Dorothy. "I can't endure it!"

It was the first protest that had escaped her. Like him, the presence of this friend from the old loved place in the east had stirred her heart, and even as she cried aloud in her anguish, the pent

up tears came, and she cried in sobs that rent her husband's heart even more than the baby's sad smile.

Wilson choked as he rose to go, and said, "Kirk, may God bless and help you at this time. I would stay and watch with you, or help in any way——"

"No, it will not be necessary. The neighbours and church people have been very kind to us. No one can do any more."

He went away to the hotel, promising to come in the morning to inquire, and the night grew on for Malcom and Dorothy. The doctor came in, a few of the most intimate church members also, but no one could do any more, and Malcom Kirk held the baby with a tenderness that relieved its suffering, for they had not been able to place its body in a restful position on a bed, and it had grown used to its cradle of long, strong arms.

It was towards morning, when no one was in the room except Malcom and Dorothy, that the baby died. It seemed to these two as they watched it go that their hearts broke, and the world turned black and empty before them, when the last breath was drawn by that frail, trembling body. For a little while Malcom held him. Then he laid the body down on a couch, and kneeling there with his arms around his wife, he joined with her in a moment of unspeakable anguish for the death of their first-born.

The sun came up dry and red, the heat of another day began to pour into the little room, and it seemed to the bereaved parents as if the earth was a great,

dry, burned-out wilderness. The neighbours called. Wilson came, and his presence and silent sympathy were a blessing to Malcom and Dorothy. But when, later in the day, the baby had been laid in the little coffin and placed in the centre of the room with a bunch of white geraniums on its breast, brought in by the members of Dorothy's Sunday-school class, Dorothy laid her head down on the table beside the coffin, and her grief was very, very great.

Next day Wilson read the funeral service and prayed at the house, and after the simple service a little company went with Malcom and Dorothy to the cemetery just on the edge of the town, and the baby was buried there, and these children of the All Father went back to the little parsonage.

It was a great blessing to them at this time that Wilson was with them. He, seeing how they clung to his presence, stayed over Sunday and preached for Malcom. It was during this stay that he learned something of what Malcom and Dorothy had been doing. A short extract from a letter written by him to his wife in the east will show us something of the first three years of Malcom Kirk and his wife's attempt to make good their pledge to help redeem the lives of the people of Conrad.

"I cannot tell you what a profound sense of sympathy I have felt for my old classmate and his wife during their great trouble, but I am simply astonished to find how great a work they have done in the three years they have been here. This is a

place of about two thousand people. It is having a boom at the present time.

"The agitation over the saloon is increasing, and I am told by Kirk and others that things are nearing a crisis, and in all likelihood the next legislature will pass a prohibitory amendment. The liquor men laugh at this probability, and scout the idea that such a law can ever be passed. There are ten saloons here in Conrad, and all apparently flourishing. Among other things that the whisky element has attempted during Kirk's stay here, has been to set the business men in his church against Kirk, with some success. Kirk's wife has been a great help to him. I think I never knew a more happy union of workers in all my life. She has been the organist and the leader in Sunday school work, and her social influence in the town is very strong. The church membership has grown from forty odd to over one hundred, and Kirk has managed to gain a hold on a large group of young men, I think largely on account of their admiration for his unusual muscular development. I think it is probably true from what I feel and hear, that already the influence of Kirk and his wife and their little church in this wild western town is the strongest influence that ever entered the place. They are very much broken up by the loss of their baby. It has been a tremendous disappointment to them. I am very anxious for them, as I think of what the result may be on their future work. The pay of a Home Missionary out here is small, and for some reason

Kirk has not been able to make much with his writing. I cannot help asking myself how the loss of their baby will affect their whole work here. Mrs. Kirk seems to be stunned by the blow. I shall leave here on Monday, and my greatest regret is that I cannot be of more help to my old classmate. He is at a crisis in his career, and everything depends on the way he accepts this death of his baby."

This is only a fragment of Wilson's letter, but the number of times he referred to the death of the baby as marking a crisis in the lives of Malcom and Dorothy revealed the depth of the impression made upon his mind by the manner in which they were affected by their loss.

He went away by the morning train, and Malcom, who had gone to the station to see him off, came slowly back to the parsonage and went into the little room next the kitchen which he had fitted up for a study.

Dorothy was at work in the kitchen, and Malcom sat down at his study table and looked out of the window across the prairie. It was unfortunate that he could see in the distance the little cemetery from that window. He finally rose and drew the curtain clear down, and went back to his desk. He took up his pen and dipped it in the ink, and then sat there, thinking, thinking of his baby. He recalled every little look, its smile, its new habits, added day by day. His heart swelled at the thought of all that he had dreamed for his boy's

future. Was God good? Was it true, this gospel of comfort he had been preaching these three years? Why, then, was he not comforted? The baby had died last Thursday night.

Three days now, and yet the world expected him to go on with his work, write sermons, make calls, attend to the thousand little details that must be remembered or some one would notice and begin to complain. How could he take up the burden of life and carry it? How could he regain his old enthusiasm or help Dorothy? He found himself saying all this, and even half fearfully asking himself if Dorothy had not made a mistake to share her life with him.

The ink had dried on his pen, and he sat there holding it, unable to write a word. Dorothy had gone out to the well, and when he missed her step in the kitchen and glanced out of the other window to see her, she was sitting on a bench he had built under the cottonwood in the yard, the only tree on the place. She had left her pail at the well and sat there looking towards the little knoll which he had shut out of his sight when he drew down his curtain.

He sat down with a groan, and for a moment the world seemed utterly empty and useless to him. He had sat there for a long time feeling all the while that his place was by his wife's side to comfort her, but hesitating for the first time since their marriage as to the right thing to do or say, when a knock at the door roused him.

A little old woman stood close up to the door, and a farm wagon and horse were out in front of the fence.

"You don't remember me, Mr. Kirk?" said the little woman, in a voice so thin and feeble that Malcom was instantly reminded of a call he had made in the spring on a family living on what was called "The Forks," eight miles from Conrad, in a very desolate ravine between two ridges of land that formed almost the only hill country for miles around.

"Yes, I do," he replied; "Mrs. Barton, isn't it?"

The woman's face lighted up faintly.

"Yes; and I'm in trouble, great trouble, Mr. Kirk, and I want you to help me."

Malcom stared at the shabby, dusty, worn-out figure, and instantly it flashed into him that she had probably not heard yet that his baby was dead. Her next words told him that was the fact.

"I've come straight here from home. My boy, Mr. Kirk, have you seen him? He left the farm on Saturday with the double team and a load of hay. I haven't seen him since. I know he is in some saloon, drinking or drunk, and the money for the hay all spent. Oh, Mr. Kirk, help me to find him and get him home again! For the love of your own baby that you expect to grow up into a good Christian man to comfort and bless you, help me to get my boy out of this hell and save him, for my heart is broken when I think of how he was once as innocent and happy as your own baby."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BEST SOLACE FOR OUR OWN GRIEF IS TO
LIGHTEN THE SORROWS OF
OTHERS.



FOR a few moments Malcom Kirk experienced a feeling of anguish on his own account that shut out entirely this other forlorn and bleeding heart. Then there sprang up in his soul a most overpowering revolution of feeling. He said to a very dear friend several years afterwards, that as he stood there on the threshold of his parsonage with the hot dusty glare of that withering day smiting him and the figure of that old woman on the doorstep, he knew that perhaps the most important event in his own inner experience was taking place. For this appeal for help, this cry to him to share a burden while his own seemed greater than he could bear, revealed to him the Christ-life in our human lives, and the glory of overcoming the world for His sake. Certain it is that as Malcom Kirk stood there that morning his soul felt the touch of a healing and beneficent love, and he looked at his life again as consecrated, and then began already to know that the fire of his own

sorrow was destined to make him more serviceable to others.

What he actually did the next minute after all this, was to ask Mrs. Barton to come into the house. He took her into his study, and then, after a single moment of hesitation, he went out into the back yard to Dorothy.

She was still sitting on the bench, dry-eyed and oblivious of everything around her, living over the last three days. Malcom came up and put his hand on her shoulder.

"Dear," he said very gently, "will you come with me into the house? There is some one there who has come to see me, to see us both."

She did not know what he meant, or hardly what he said, but she rose and went into the house with him.

"Mrs. Barton, this is Mrs. Kirk. I want you to tell her what you have told me."

The little woman could see that something unusual had happened at the parsonage, but her own trouble practically absorbed her feelings. She looked at Dorothy, however, with the admiration which her beauty of face often excited in what we call ordinary people.

"Oh, ma'am," she cried, "I've come to see if Mr. Kirk won't help me to get my boy home again. He's been drinking. I live in a lonesome place, at The Forks, and I don't very often come to town, but I have heard of your husband, and they say people all around have gone to him for help, and I

know he will do what he can for me. My boy will be twenty-one next week. I told your husband that some day your baby would grow up into a good Christian man, to comfort and bless you. That's what I hoped and prayed my boy would do. And he might, if the saloon had not tempted him."

She was going on, for her heart was full of her trouble, when the look on Dorothy's face stopped her.

"Don't you know, has not Mr. Kirk told you, that our baby—our baby—died last week?"

The little heart-broken woman looked at Dorothy in astonishment. There was nothing refined or sweet about her, but God gave her the right word to say at that particular time. She rose, and with her hands clasped, walked over near Dorothy. Malcom never forgot that sight. "Oh, Mrs. Kirk, may God help you! Forgive me! I have not been to town for several weeks. I did not see the paper last week at all. The last time I knew anything of your baby he was well and happy. I would never have come with my trouble if I had known yours." She paused for a moment, while two tears ran down her thin cheeks. Dorothy began to sob. She had not cried before, since that day when the baby was laid in its coffin. Not even at the grave.

"Oh, ma'am," Mrs. Barton went on, "your baby will never be a drunkard. My husband was. We lost a good farm back in Ohio on account of the drink, and then my husband died, and I took the boy and came out here. I went purposely to a lonesome

place to keep my boy from the town. I may have made a mistake, but I did the best I knew, and I feared for him on account of his father. Oh, ma'am, your heart is sore, I know it, but it's not as sore as mine, for your baby never broke your heart. I would sooner see my boy in his coffin than see him as I have many a time during the past two years. There's trouble and trouble. May God help us to bear our own. But your baby's safe now. How can I tell if mine ever will be?"

She spoke the last words in such a tone of hopeless sadness, that Dorothy lifted up her head and looked at her.

"Don't say that!" she said, and the tears flowed down her face faster. They were merciful tears. Her heart, which had been fast bound within her, as if it would burst, felt the first relief she had known. God was leading her. She still did not know that what Malcom had experienced had come to her also. But the lonely stricken woman in the little study, representing so much human sorrow of a kind that neither Dorothy nor Malcom knew, had touched her. She, also, was able to say to her husband years afterwards that she felt as if the coming of that other burden into their own heavy-hearted lives was a part of the loving Father's plan for their victory in overcoming the world, the world of what might have grown to be a very selfish sorrow.

What happened, all that was said in that little study room after that, is not easy to tell. But when

Mrs. Barton went out, Malcom Kirk went with her. Dorothy went into her own little room and prayed, and there was that in her prayer that revealed to her the loving Father. For the first time she saw her baby surrounded by the Infinite love, and when she came back to her work in the kitchen, there was hope, immortal hope and a large measure of the peace of Christ in her heart.

Malcom Kirk got into the farm wagon with Mrs. Barton, and they drove down to the main business street of Conrad.

"Now, Mrs. Barton," Malcom had said, "if you will wait outside, I'll go into the saloons and see if I can find your boy. While I'm looking, you might question passers-by, and ask them if they have seen the hay wagon and horses anywhere."

She thanked him gratefully, and he noted that even in the burning sun her thin, sorrowful figure trembled and shivered and her lips quivered as if she were cold. His compassion for her motherhood increased every moment.

"God help her," he said as he stepped down out of the wagon. "This boy is one of the lost ones in this town that Dorothy and I pledged ourselves three years ago to rescue. Heaven give me strength and wisdom to make that promise good."

He had never been inside a saloon in his life. He shrank from the ordeal before him, with all the shuddering of a highly sensitive spirit in the presence of an ugly, repulsive, hideous evil. But he went at

once into the first saloon in the main street and stopped inside near the door and looked around him.

At first his entrance attracted no attention. A few men were lounging at the bar. Others were seated at the tables. But as he remained by the door, two or three of those nearest him turned and looked at him. One of the men was a labourer who had several times been employed by Malcom in odd jobs about the house.

Instantly, Kirk walked over to him and held out his hand. "Carver, do you know Mrs. Barton's boy? Philip is his name. She is looking for him. He left home on Saturday, and she is sure he is in one of the saloons somewhere."

The man looked very much embarrassed. He shuffled his feet nervously in the dirty sawdust under the table.

"I saw him yesterday. He was in Valmer's."

"Thank you," said Malcom, slowly. "Can any of you gentlemen tell me anything about him? Has any one seen him to-day?"

No one answered; and there was a painful silence. The bar-keeper, who had been eyeing Kirk, suddenly broke the silence by saying with a short laugh,

"You won't find him here. I won't say he hasn't been here. He knows a good thing when he sees it. Won't you step up and take a glass this morning? We keep the best in the town on tap for preachers."

There was a laugh from one or two of the men nearest the speaker, but Malcom simply looked him

in the face without a word. He then laid his hand on Carver's shoulder and said softly :

" I'm sorry to see you here, Carver. You promised me you would quit it."

The man writhed in his seat, but did not say a word. Kirk looked at him sorrowfully.

" Come, Carver, come out of this. I'll give you something to do. Don't lose your soul in this place."

" Say," said the bar-keeper, who had been leaning with his elbows on the bar listening, as had also every other man in the saloon, "you leave my customers alone, will you, and mind your own business."

" That's just what I am doing," replied Kirk, earnestly, and, as he spoke, his pale blue eyes filled with a high, white light. "It is my business to destroy your business. Man, do you know that just outside that door is a mother's broken heart that you have helped to break? And hers is only one out of thousands all over the world. Mind my own business! It is exactly what I intend to do, until every den like this is wiped out of this town."

He spoke very quietly, almost softly; his voice did not declaim, but the unusual quality of it thrilled everybody there. He looked into their faces a moment, and with a last appealing look at Carver, he turned and went out.

" Whew!" said the bar-keeper. "First sermon ever delivered here. Score one for Parson Kirk!"

The other men did not respond with much enthusiasm. Carver had risen from the table.

"Better have one before you go," said the saloon keeper.

"I won't drink again to-day," Carver retorted with an oath which was a curse. He staggered over to the door and went out into the glare of the hot, withering sun. Down the street he could see Kirk just entering Valmer's place.

"I'm half a mind to help Mr. Kirk hunt for the boy," Carver muttered. He hesitated for a moment, and then went on down the street, following the minister.

That forenoon Malcom Kirk went into every saloon in Conrad, but he failed to get any trace of the missing boy. Always behind him, unknown to him, Carver staggered. In two or three saloons the man was unable to resist the invitation to drink, but he managed to keep just sober enough to know where Kirk was and to follow him.

The sights that greeted Malcom in the saloons were never forgotten by him. He was astonished to see the number of men and boys gathered in the saloons. Many of the faces he knew, and his entrance invariably created a distinct embarrassment through the company. The majority of customers, however, seemed, from their dress and talk, to be composed of farmers, young men from the ranches outlying Conrad. Malcom was simply appalled when he thought of what such a fact meant.

He said to himself every time he came out and faced the dumbly-appealing face in the farm wagon,

"And yet we, Christian people, license these enemies of the race and allow them to continue their devilish work, although we know well enough how devilish it is. May God help us as a State to declare against it by statute as well as by prayers and sermons." He lived, as did every temperance man in Kansas at that time, in the great hope ~~that~~ the day was **not** far off when the saloon would be declared outlaw, but how near that day was, not even he was able to predict.

It was nearly noon when he finished his tour of the saloons, and as he came out near the lower end of the main street there was a large group of men standing there looking across the prairie and talking eagerly together. The wind had risen, and was blowing almost a gale, carrying great clouds of dust through the town, and off as far as men could see, there was a column of smoke spreading out with great rapidity.

"The prairie fires have started early," Kirk thought, but it was only when one of the ranchmen in the street spoke that he realised what the fires might mean.

"If this wind keeps up, this town will have its hands full in about an hour."

The speaker ran to his horse, jumped on it, and was soon galloping out of the town towards one of the new ranches in the direction of The Forks.

"Mrs. Barton, it is possible that your boy has gone home since you left."

"Yes, yes," cried the woman, snatching at any hope. "I will go back. If the fire should come into

The Forks I ought to be there to see that my other boy has help in getting the stock behind the fire guards. We ploughed ours early this year on account of the dry weather. We lost all our haystacks one September from fires."

She drove out of town, after thanking Kirk earnestly for all that he had done, and Malcom promised to continue the search after dinner.

He was just starting home, after asking several men if there was really any immediate danger to the town from the fires, when through the dust, racing in from the prairie, came a team of powerful farm horses drawing an empty hay wagon. The reins were trailing on the ground and the harness was broken, and as they rushed by some one shouted, "That's Phil Barton's team." A little farther down the street the horses were caught and stopped. Kirk ran up with a crowd of other men.

"No signs of Phil anywhere," said one of the men who had helped catch the team.

"He's probably been thrown out somewhere."

"I wouldn't give much for his chances if he fell off in the gully grass over there," said another, pointing towards the district from which the horses had come.

Malcom's mind was in a whirl.

"He may be near by. We ought not to leave him without looking for him."

As he spoke he heard the boy's mother saying as she faced Dorothy in the study, "My boy may never be saved."

"We've got our hands full looking after the town. We might as well face that fact. No rain for two months, water all out of cisterns and low in wells, and that fire coming down on us forty miles an hour," said one of the business men.

Kirk looked around him. The citizens were coming out of the stores and houses and the whole town was roused to face and fight the coming danger. For it was true, unless the wind changed or died down, Conrad was threatened with the fate which that year befell more than one ranch and settlement.

"I believe Dorothy would tell me to go," he said to himself. Then he spoke aloud. "I don't feel like giving young Barton up if he is anywhere near. We can perhaps reach him before the fire reaches us. Who will go with me?"

"I will," said Carver, who was at Malcom's elbow.

"Come on, then," Malcom cried. And together the two men started at a run in the direction from which the horses had come.

"Was Barton a friend of yours?" asked Carver, as he panted by the side of the minister.

"No, I only knew him slightly."

"What are you trying to find him for?"

"For his mother."

The men ran on. Over on the near horizon a line of flame and smoke over twenty-five miles long marched down towards them and the town of Conrad, with a prairie gale behind it, and human love and courage in its path.

CHAPTER IX.



KIRK PREVENTS A LYNCHING.

S Malcom Kirk and Carver ran on, directly in the face of that wild line of fire and smoke, there was only one supreme thought in the mind of Malcom. He saw the boy's mother, and while he ran he heard her voice as she had appealed to him in his study.

Instinctively, the two men bore off from the road over which the horses had entered the town, towards a swale where the grass and rosin weeds grew deep, and it was but a few feet from the beaten track of the prairie road that they saw the body of Philip Barton, lying face downwards, the hands clenched, and holding tightly a broken piece of the lines of the harness.

No time then to stop and ask whether he was living, but up with him between them, and back to the town with all the power of their pulsing manhood.

Carver was entirely sober now. He was naturally a man of great muscular endurance. Malcom had kept up his physical training in his work with the young men in the church.

Not a word was said. They realised that the time was short, and they ran with their unconscious heavy burden between them.

Meanwhile, men, women, and children had organised in a desperate effort to save the town. There was one fact in their favour. It had been the custom for those living on the edge of the town to picket their animals out on the prairie near by. The grass was cropped short on this account. Under any ordinary circumstances this fact would have insured safety from any usual fire. But the whole prairie was aflame, everything was as dry as two months of drought and hot winds could make it, and water, for a long time, had been very scarce in wells and cisterns. Behind that advancing line of fire was a prairie gale that shot the flames straight forward, and old settlers, some of whom had seen the great fires in Dakota in the early sixties, looked at the sight now before them with grave faces.

Dorothy came to the door of the parsonage, stood there a moment, and then ran, with other women, her neighbours, down to the main street.

Bucket lines were being formed from all the wells and cisterns that were available. She instantly joined with the others in handing the water. A large company of men, armed with wet cloths to whip out the fire, began to form as far from the houses as they dared. It was too late now to plough fire-breaks, and too windy to make a back fire. The only hope that any one had was that the shortness of the grass near

the town would check the fury of the advancing whirlwind of flame.

"Have you seen Mr. Kirk?" Dorothy asked as she first joined the others. And they told her. Her face blanched, and her lips breathed a prayer as she worked on silently. She knew that he whom she never loved as she loved him at that moment was in the line of duty, and she would not have called him back from it. But her heart cried out for help, and she agonised for him whom her soul dearly loved.

Down came the great wall of fire and smoke. The hot air scorched the faces of the fire-fighters. Dim figures out on the advanced line were seen desperately struggling with the element. The town was enveloped in smoke and burned-out ashes of prairie grass that sifted over the workers until the faces and hands of all were black and grimy. Scores of men rushed upon the fire line as it came on, checked somewhat by the short grass, and stamped out the flame with their feet, with rags, with old brooms, with pieces of carpeting and bedding torn from their own houses. The outstanding line of fighters was forced back, burned and exhausted, but the fire had been checked, and as it broke out in new places, fresh groups threw themselves upon it and fought for the life of the town.

Dorothy could not remember how she came to be with the fighters on the prairie, instead of with the water carriers, but it was undoubtedly her anxiety for Malcom's safety that urged her out towards the

fire. Her dress had caught on fire and been put out several times. Some one had thrown water over her, but she had hardly known it. She worked with all the others in a silent frenzy. Suddenly, she was conscious of a tall, awkward figure near her, looming up through the smoke, threshing at the fire with powerful energy, a very incarnation of resistance and stubborn refusal to surrender.

"Malcom," she cried, and faint as she was, she felt new life at the sight of him.

"Dorothy! Thank God! We got back with him just in time."

There was no time to say more. The danger was still great. Near together now, husband and wife fought on. The citizens of Conrad afterwards bore witness to the way in which they fought.

"Say, did you see Mr. Kirk?" A group of men at the post office, several days after the great fire, were talking it over.

"These New England folks beat every other kind when it comes to never giving up."

"Yes, or fighting the devil. Our minister beats all the rest at that," said Carver, who spoke of Kirk as "our minister," although he had never been a member of any church, and rarely went to hear even Malcom preach. But it was a tribute to the hold Malcom had secured on such men that they appropriated him somehow to themselves or to the best that was struggling in them.

It was nearly the middle of the afternoon of that

eventful day that the people of Conrad, exhausted, burned, blackened, saw the great danger pass around them, and the galloping whirlwind thundered off beyond the town, leaving a mighty and desolate expanse of black and smouldering prairie behind it.

Then it was that the severest trial of all came to Malcom and Dorothy.

They had gone into the house of one of their parishioners, where the body of Philip Barton had been carried. He was living, but had received some injuries from falling out of the wagon, probably, when the team ran away.

They had come out of the house, and were on their way home, when some one in the street suddenly clutched Malcom's arm, and, pointing through the smoke, cried out :

“ Look there ! The church is on fire ! ”

The church and parsonage stood at the opposite end of the town from the prairie fire, and the danger had been the least in that quarter. That part of the town had been entirely deserted while the fight had been going on at the other end.

“ If the church goes, the parsonage will go, too,” thought Malcom, as he and Dorothy ran through the street.

When they reached the parsonage, the roof had already caught from a flying timber blown off the church tower. The water of the town was exhausted. The well in the parsonage yard was already nearly empty. Malcom rushed into the house, and, by

desperate work, helped by several other men, succeeded in carrying out some furniture and a few of his books.

One of the boxes in Dorothy's room was blazing as he carried it out and threw it down, and a pile of papers in a portfolio was scattered. Dorothy, as she worked helping to carry some pieces of furniture to a place of safety, felt something blow against her face, and, putting up her hand, she caught a piece of paper.

Even in the excitement she saw what it was. It was the sketch that Francis Raleigh had drawn on board the *Cephalonia* three years before, the sketch of Malcom holding the baby. Dorothy sobbed as she saw what it was. Her own baby! And now their home and nearly all the things they counted dear!

It was over soon, and in a little while the church and parsonage, the work of many a weary struggle for their little company of disciples, were dreary heaps of ruin. A hard fight on the part of the worn-out citizens had kept the other houses from being burned. The church and parsonage had stood on a piece of ground by themselves.

"After all," said Malcom when it was all over, as he sat down by Dorothy on a trunk, while a little group of neighbours stood by discussing the incidents of the fire, "After all, dear, we have a good deal to be thankful for."

"Yes," said Dorothy, with a smile. It was a little hard for her, as she sat there, to imagine that Dorothy

Gilbert had once, back in her New England home, been noted for the elegance and refinement of all her ways and surroundings. Nothing but the great love she bore the man who had asked her to share his life now made her insensible to that former life before she was married.

Malcom Kirk sat there gazing at the ruins of his home and his church, and deep down in his heart there was a mighty conflict going on. He had lost his books, nearly all that were of value, and the other losses were great. He was blackened and burned, his clothes hung in ragged rents about him, his great fists were bleeding, and here, beside him, was the woman who had left all, for — what? To share such privations, dangers, losses?

For a moment he hardly heard what some of his parishioners were saying. They had been talking excitedly together.

“Mr. Kirk, we are of the opinion that this fire was incendiary.”

“How is that?” asked Malcom, rousing up a little.

“The first seen of it was in the tower. Now, the fire from the prairie could not possibly have caught up there. Some one must have ignited it.”

Then different ones began to whisper their suspicions.

The next day, while Malcom and Dorothy were staying with one of the church members, who took them into his home, the rumour grew that the fire was the work of the whisky men.

Down in the street excited groups of men gathered that evening, discussing the matter. Every one knew that Malcom Kirk had fought the saloons from the first day of his entrance into Conrad. He was feared and hated by them more than any one else. He had succeeded, to a large degree, in getting the other churches to act together in the agitation now going on all over the State. He was already noted for his leadership throughout the county, and had written and spoken on every possible occasion for the proposed prohibitory amendment.

So there was reason in the suspicion held by the citizens. As the evening wore on, proof of a certain saloon man's guilt seemed almost sure. Two or three persons had seen him coming out of the parsonage yard that afternoon of the fire. A child had seen the same man on the steps of the church a few minutes after Dorothy had left the parsonage.

It was now ten o'clock. The crowd at the corner by the post-office grew every minute larger and more threatening. Groups of men stood surrounding some speaker, who urged lynching as the only satisfactory punishment for such a crime. The citizens were exasperated and nervous from the great strain of the last two days.

Malcom Kirk came down town late that night to get the mail from the east-bound express, and walked into the mob just as cries of "Lynch him!" rose from many voices. As soon as the crowd saw him, it surrounded him, excitedly.

"Mr. Kirk, we've proof that 'Big Jake' set fire to your church."

Malcom looked over the crowd a moment, in silence. He had not been thinking so much about the loss of his church and parsonage as he came down town, as about Dorothy and his future prospects. But the sight and sound of that mob of citizens brought his mind back to the situation, not only in the town of Conrad, but throughout the entire State. For the time, therefore, he let his own personal plans go, as he faced the fact of a grave crisis in the temperance movement.

He had, more than one Sunday evening, held out-door services at the very corner where the crowd now gathered.

Dorothy had often helped him at such services, by playing and singing. Every man in Conrad was familiar with the tall, homely, awkward figure that now towered over almost every other head, and every man in Conrad respected him.

There was an empty dry goods box near one of the stores, and Malcom Kirk asked some of the men to drag it out to the corner of the sidewalk. The minute he had mounted it, the crowd became silent.

It is a rare gift to be able to speak to a great crowd of men out of doors, and hold them. Kirk possessed that gift. His voice was a splendid instrument, and he knew how to use it.

And he used it now in a God-like manner. He began by calling attention to the fact that the people

of the State were trying to abolish the saloon by legislative amendment to the Constitution. At such a time as that, for the temperance people to act in a lawless manner, towards even the enemies of the home and the Church, would be an act of folly so great that it might endanger the entire movement for prohibition.

"I am, perhaps," continued Malcom, "the most interested person in this whole matter. It is my church that has been burned, and my home that has been destroyed. And yet I say to you men, that if you attempt to use violence towards 'Big Jake,' or any other saloon keeper, on the ground of this circumstantial evidence, and take the law into your own hands, I will defend him from such violence at the risk of my own life. Let us act like men in this matter; like men who see farther than personal vengeance, and are determined that our fight shall be directed, not against the saloon keeper, so much as against the business he represents. That is what we want to fight for in behalf of all our homes and churches, and our state and country."

He got down off the box, after he had spoken, and appealed, in a quiet but powerful manner, to some of the most influential men in the crowd not to let the men act lawlessly. His speech and appeal had their effect. A small group of men on the edge of the crowd gathered farther up the street, and after Kirk had gone home, they marched up to "Big Jake's" saloon, only to find it closed and the proprietor fled.

CHAPTER X.

DOROTHY PROVES HERSELF A HELPMEET.



THE next day, Malcom Kirk had the melancholy pleasure of taking Philip Barton out to The Forks. He had recovered sufficiently to be moved, and Malcom borrowed a spring wagon from a neighbour and placed the sick man in it comfortably. He complained of feeling queer in his back, and could not stand on his feet, and the doctor told Kirk before he started that it would not be surprising if Barton should prove to be paralysed. "In fact, Mr. Kirk, my examination makes it almost certain that the boy will probably never recover so as to use the lower part of his body. It seems probable that the wheels of the hay wagon passed over him after he fell out."

The prairie was one vast burned stretch of plain, with the road grey and distinct through it. Philip Barton lay back on the cot that had been arranged in the wagon box, and looked up at Malcom with a white, strained face, as he drove slowly along over the smooth, elastic prairie road.

At first, Malcom drove on silently. The boy seemed to be quite comfortable, but unwilling to talk, and during the first two miles hardly a word was spoken. Then Malcom stopped the horses, and bent down to arrange some part of the cot. When he had finished and gathered up the reins to go on again, young Barton spoke.

"You were one of the men that found me and brought me into the town, Mr. Kirk?" The boy had asked it twice before.

"Yes," replied Malcom, smiling. "You can't imagine what a great joy it was to me when we found you."

"And Carver was the other man?"

"Yes."

"That seems queer to me. How did he happen to go with you?"

"Well, I don't know, exactly. He seemed eager to go."

"Was he—had he been drinking?" The question came with evident painful effort.

"Yes, I think he had," replied Malcom, frankly. "But he was sober enough when we found you."

There was silence, and Malcom gathered up the reins again and started on. The day was very still, and there was a great cloud coming up in the southwest which promised rain before night.

"It was a great thing for you to do," said Philip slowly. "I'll never forget it, Mr. Kirk."

"It was a very little thing, my boy, compared

with what was done for me once," said Malcom, gravely.

"What was that?"

"I was lost once in a great wilderness and surrounded with wild beasts. I was sick and starving and unable to save myself. Night was coming on, and every minute added to my danger. Just when I had given myself up as lost, and the wild beasts had gathered around me in the growing darkness, a friend suddenly appeared. He saved me, but in doing it, He lost His own life. That is a good deal more than I did for you."

Philip had listened intently. But something in Malcom's manner kept him silent.

"That wilderness where I was lost," continued Malcom, softly, as his early life before he entered the Seminary came back to him, "was the wilderness of sin, and the wild beasts were my passions, and the friend who saved me was Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the lost, who gave Himself a ransom for many."

There was not a particle of cant or attempt at preaching in what Malcom had said. It was so simple, so natural, that the boy on the cot hardly realised at first what the minister had said.

When it dawned upon him that Malcom had spoken of his own conversion, he closed his eyes, and his face twitched under his emotion. When he looked up again, Malcom had turned, and was looking down at him.

"Do you mind if we pray here?" said Malcom.

Philip moved his head, and in his eyes a look of expectant wonder grew. Malcom stopped the horses. The prairie was wide, and desolate, and black. Not a sign of life anywhere. The atmosphere was still. The sun shone over it all. The town lay distinct in the near distance. And, somehow, it seemed as if Kirk spoke to God close by. He sat with his hands on his knee and looked out into the line of the horizon.

"Father in heaven," he said, "we do not know what it all meant when the Lord came to this earth and lived, and suffered, and died. But we know enough to feel sure that love for us was what made Him do it. Love for sinners. We are always asking something, Father, but what we want now is what Thou dost want. Save another life, this one here that is in so much need. His body has been saved for a little while from physical death. Save his life for all time, from eternal loss. His mother is praying for him. All heaven is anxious for his salvation. If Thou wilt show us what more we can do, dear Lord, we will do it. But lead him to Thyself, for we cannot forgive his sins nor keep him from them. Thou canst do it if he will let Thee. For the great love of Jesus to us, we give Thee all we have. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory. Amen."

He gathered up the reins and went slowly on, and for the next mile not a word was said. Then Malcom, hearing the boy move to change his position a little, turned and looked down at him.

"Do you believe that, Mr. Kirk?" he asked, while his lips quivered.

"What?"

"That 'all heaven is anxious for my salvation'?"

"Why not? The Book says 'There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.' Why shouldn't heaven be anxious to have us repent?"

"I don't know, but——"

"'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.' He cares as much for you as for any soul on earth," said Malcom, gently.

Philip was silent after that during the rest of the drive. He lay with his eyes closed, and Malcom did not think it wise to talk any more to him, but a continual prayer went out of his heart for another sheep gone astray.

When they drove up to the house at The Forks, Mrs. Barton came running out. She helped Malcom lift Philip into the house, and as the boy was being lowered upon a bed, he reached up his arms and put them around his mother's neck. The poor woman sank on her knees, and with her face buried on the breast of her boy, sobbed out her heart's joy at his home-coming. When Kirk was ready to return to Conrad, she held his hand, reluctant to have him go.

"Heaven bless you, Mr. Kirk, I owe you more than I can tell. The fire carried off our grain stacks in the field, out there, and we lost several of our sheds, but I would gladly go out into the world a beggar, if

Phil would only turn to God and give up the drink. And you and Mrs. Kirk have your great burden. I am selfish to add mine to it."

"'Bear ye one another's burdens,'" quoted Malcom, and added, instantly, "'Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.'" So he left her standing there, looking after him, comforted.

He went back to Conrad and faced the situation there with a courageous heart, and an outward cheerfulness for Dorothy's sake, more than anything else. There was no attempt on the part of either of them to disguise the fact that the prospect before them was one that would try all their Christian courage and faith. The winter was coming on, the crops had been almost a total failure owing to the hot winds, and the little boom of which Wilson had spoken in his letter had collapsed, leaving the town in a wrecked condition financially. The fields that had been planted with corn stood dry and hard, unfit for ploughing, and even the storm that broke over the town that night was only local, and had no far-reaching result on the general situation.

It was also a new, and in some respects a terrible condition that faced Dorothy. For the first time in her life she knew that she was poor. Malcom Kirk had never known anything else. Poverty was a heritage to him, and, while it was full of discomfort and privation, it had no terror. But Dorothy had, for the first time, on coming to that Home Missionary field, felt the touch of grim and stern economy. Her

little dowry saved from the wreck of her father's failure had been added to Malcom's small salary, but the illness of the baby, and the constant calls on their help from various sources, had eaten into this little fund and it was gone. Dorothy's aunt would gladly have helped, but her own resources were shortened by business failures within the three years that Dorothy had been west. Now, the loss of the parsonage, with nearly everything it contained, was added to all the rest.

"Little woman," said Malcom, that evening, after he had been to The Forks, "we have very little left, except our good looks, and the balance is in your favour."

They were sitting in the little room kindly offered them by one of their church members, and had been talking over the situation with the frankness that had always characterised their married life.

"I used to read in the novels," said Dorothy, with a peculiar smile, "about the girl who married the poor but gifted young man and spurned the rich and high-born suitor, but I never thought I should be material for such a story myself."

Malcom looked at her, and deep in his heart there was a battle going on that he hardly dared to analyse. He only knew that he longed, somehow, to be able to grapple a physical, tangible something, and fight it for Dorothy's sake and prove to her that he could be more than a poor man.

"Malcom," Dorothy said, as she came over and

sat down on a stool near by, and put her hands in his great brown palm, looking up at his sober, anxious face, "Malcom, once for all, if I need to say it, I am not afraid of being poor. I trust you. You do not think I will add to your burden by being weak at such a time as this? Was it not through sickness and health, for better, for worse, that I vowed to give you all I have and am until death do us part?"

Malcom Kirk caught up his wife, and a great shadow swept out of his soul, a great burden fell off his heart. He had not really doubted Dorothy's ability to face any possible event in their lives, but he eagerly welcomed her loving unconditional statement of it.

Nevertheless, he began his struggle for a new church and parsonage during the weeks that followed, with vague questionings of his choice of a place for his life-work. He no longer had any fears for Dorothy's sake. But he found himself longing to give her what he could not give, from any human foresight, in the Home Missionary field where they now were.

It was at this time, with this experience personal and peculiar to his married life, that Malcom Kirk, fighting against great odds, began a work in Conrad that had the farthest possible results on its after life. This work was an attempt to unite the various churches in a combined and constant crusade against the saloon. Matters were nearing a crisis for the temperance cause. All over the State, meetings were being held. The agitation for a prohibitory amend-

ment was growing into such proportions that men who felt the pulse of the common people predicted victory. And still the whisky forces sneered at the possibility of an amendment.

Kirk succeeded in uniting the five other churches with his own in a series of union meetings during the week, as well as on Sundays. His own church secured for the use of worship a little store room in the main street while waiting to hear from the Church Building Society, to which they had made application for a grant of 500 dollars to help rebuild church and parsonage.

Together with all this work in the town, Malcom was constantly sent for to speak in the district school houses. His reputation as a temperance talker was growing. He often went out during the week and spoke to crowded houses, returning late at night.

It was during his absence from Conrad on one of these school house campaigns that one evening four letters came to him, and Dorothy opened them, as Malcom had always asked her to do, in order that answers might be sent, in case he was detained from home several days at a time.

The first letter was from the superintendent of the Home Missionary Society, and read as follows :

“ Rev. Malcom Kirk, Conrad, Kas. :

“ Dear Brother :—It is with great regret that the Society is compelled to announce to many of the brethren who are commissioned on the frontier that,

owing to a lack of funds in the New York treasury, it will be impossible to forward the quarter's salary when due. It is with the greatest possible regret that I am obliged to make this statement, but it is unavoidable. It is probable there may be a delay of three or four months before the money can be sent. Meanwhile, your church must be urged to do all it can for your support, until the wealthier churches respond to the special appeal now being sent out by the Society in behalf of the missionaries at the front.

"I am, Your Brother," &c.

The second letter that Dorothy opened was from the Church Building Society, expressing great regret that, owing to excessive calls from other fields, the Society had not the funds to spare at present to assist the unfortunate church at Conrad, but hoped to be able to do so at some future time, &c., &c.

Dorothy hesitated before she opened the next letter, and in spite of her effort at self-control, a tear fell with a hot splash on the envelope. She knew only too well what a real disappointment the letters she had already opened would be to Malcom.

The third letter bore a Boston postmark, and was from the editor of a religious paper. It acknowledged the receipt of an article sent by Malcom some two months before, and retained it with a view to publication when the press of matter already accepted would permit, &c. Payment for the article would be sent when it was published.

Dorothy's face flushed with pride at Malcom's success as a writer, and at the same time she could not help feeling that if the editor of that paper only knew how much they needed the money, he would pay for the article when he accepted it, instead of keeping the author waiting until it appeared in print. But she was unfamiliar with the customs of magazines and newspapers in this respect, and she rejoiced, after all, that her husband had been able to write anything that such a famous paper wanted.

The last letter, also, bore a Boston postmark, and after reading the letter, Dorothy laid it down and rose to walk the little room, while her cheeks burned with excitement and her eyes flashed with a light that had not been seen in them for many days.

"My dear Mr. Kirk," the letter read. "For several months we have been considering your name in connection with a vacancy on our editorial board, and have at last decided unanimously to ask you to assume the place of assistant under the chief editor of the magazine. We have been led to this decision by our knowledge of your work on the German Scholarship three years ago, and also from a perusal of several articles recently written by you, and printed in the Boston Review. In addition to this, we know of your work in Conrad, through Mr. Wilson, your old Seminary classmate, who last year was on our board for a time. We make you this offer, and hope you will see your way to accept. The salary will be 2000 dollars a year with opportunity of increase. The

press is as powerful as the pulpit in these days, and you may be sure your usefulness will not be shortened or lessened by making this change. We await your reply, hoping it will be favourable to us."

Here followed the name of a person who was at the head of one of the most influential papers published in New England. Dorothy knew well enough how much Malcom thought of the man, and how often he had expressed his admiration for the character of his literary work.

She picked the letter up and read it through again. What was there in Conrad, this wild, uninteresting, western town, struggling against a financial depression and a future as well as a past failure of crops? How could Malcom ever rise to any place worthy of his powers in this little church so feeble and so poor? "It is true," she found herself saying, "it is true, he chose the ministry as his life-work, and he has often said he would not do anything else. But——"

She went to the door and stepped out on the little porch. It was after ten o'clock, and a frosty night. Down the main street she could see the lights from the saloons. There was a brawl going on in front of one of them. But that was common. A group of cowboys galloped down the street, firing their pistols as they came. That was not unusual. Dorothy shuddered. What of that promise she had made with Malcom to try to redeem the lost of Conrad. Was it worth while, after all? It would be so much pleasanter to live in Boston. They could

have things, and live as other people lived, and after awhile her husband would become famous, and——

“Well, little woman, won’t you take cold out here?”

It was Malcom, and he led her into the house again. She had not seen him come. He had unexpectedly finished his engagement and been able to return much sooner than he expected.

She saw, as he came in, that he was very tired, but was making a brave effort to appear cheerful and contented. She hesitated about showing him the letters, but he had already seen the open envelopes on the table, and his hand went out towards them. Dorothy stood between him and the table.

“Will you read them in the order I say?” asked Dorothy.

“Certainly. Must I get ready for bad news?” he asked, soberly.

“It is for you to say,” Dorothy answered. And she gave him the letters in the same order that she had opened them, and stood watching his face, hungrily, as he read them.

CHAPTER XI.

A MOMENT OF DOUBT.



ALCOM read the four letters through one after the other, without a word of comment. Only, Dorothy, watching him, noted the expressions on his face. When he finished the letter from the Boston magazine, he looked up.

"Well," said Dorothy, slowly, as if Malcom had asked a question.

"It's a great offer," said Malcom. He was evidently very much moved by it. And he rose and walked up and down.

Finally, he stopped near the door.

"I shall have to go out of doors and walk off the excitement," he said, looking at Dorothy with a faint smile. She was familiar with that habit. Malcom had often done that when tired of the cramped quarters of his little study in the parsonage.

He walked to the table, took up his hat and went to the door. He opened it, and then turned back to Dorothy, who sat with her elbow on the table, and her chin in her hand, thinking.

"Will you go with me, dear?" Malcom asked quietly.

She rose without a word and, putting on her hat and cloak, went out with him. They walked out of the yard, and then, after a moment of hesitation, they turned and went down the narrow board sidewalk towards the main street of the town.

It was almost eleven o'clock. Nearly all the stores were closed, but every saloon was wide open. As they went by one of the largest at the first business corner, two or three men near the door recognised Kirk and touched their hats, saying very respectfully as they did so, "Good evening, Mr. Kirk!"

"Good evening, gentlemen," replied Malcom, touching his hat. He passed on with Dorothy, but with all the inner conflict going on, she had time to think of the little incident and say to herself, proudly, "Even the loafers and drinkers respect my husband."

And it was true, because they knew in their hearts that Malcom Kirk loved them, wretched, useless creatures as many of them were, down at the very bottom of the human scale, down where nothing but love could reach them.

As they went past one of the dancing houses, they could hear the jingle of spurs on boots, the wild laughter of the women, the clink of glasses at the bar.

Dorothy shuddered, and drew up closer to Malcom. To both of them it is probable that there was borne in upon them the lost abandoned life that always goes with the liquor trade, the desperate, lawless

character of young men and women who represented so large a part of the social life of the town. What a relief it would be to get away from it all, back to the culture and refinement of books and companionable people, and the life of freedom from moral struggle for the life of others, that awaited them in that New England home which might be theirs for the taking!

They had walked through the street, and were out on the prairie road before either of them said a word.

Then Malcom said, while he pressed Dorothy's arm close to his own :

"What do you think I had better do?"

She was not prepared to have him ask a question, and she was not ready with an answer.

"What would you do in my place?" he asked, after waiting for her to answer his first question.

"Don't ask me, Malcom!" cried Dorothy, almost tearfully.

He bent his head, and in the starlight saw her face moved with unusual excitement.

"It is true," he began to talk to himself, "it is true, as he says, 'the press is as powerful as the pulpit in these days.' I could certainly do as much good that way as any. I feel as if I could use my pen for the good of humanity."

"Yes! Yes!" Dorothy cried, eagerly. She spoke as if Malcom's words had been a great relief to her. Then she went on almost passionately,

"What can you do here, Malcom? You can slave

yourself to death out here with this little church, and never accomplish much. You cannot do the church work and the writing too. You will break down under it. How can you ever build again, with the hard times and so many families moving away, and winter coming on? And your salary, little as it is, so cruelly delayed; it is a humiliation to keep on this narrow, pinched life, with no companionship to speak of, no money to buy new books, with a debt on a poor struggling church that will wear your life out before you have reached your prime. I don't mind for myself, Malcom, you know, it was 'for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer,' but it seems to me your life will be simply thrown away if you remain out here. Such an offer as this will not come to you again, probably. If I were you——"

She stopped, and Malcom eagerly waited for the rest.

"If I were you," Dorothy went on, strongly, "I would answer the letter at once, and accept the offer. I want to see you succeed in life. I want to have the world know your strength as I do."

He made no reply, and they walked on a little farther. Then Malcom spoke as if again reasoning with himself.

"I certainly could do as much good that way as any."

He was silent again. They had reached a place where the road branched off to "The Forks." They turned and went back towards the town. When they

reached the first houses, they took the street which led past the ruins of the church and parsonage. They seemed to do this without saying to each other that they would. Their walk back had been in silence.

When they reached the corner where the church and parsonage had stood, they stopped and looked at the ruins.

These were mournful, as such ruins always are. The foundation line of the church building looked pitifully small to Malcom as he thought of the little congregations that had so often met there for worship or the prayer service. And still he could not, even there, as he viewed what seemed like a failure in life—he could not shut out of his sight the picture of Dorothy and himself as they had gone into the church that first night of their arrival in Conrad three years before, and had there made together their solemn promise to redeem the lost of Conrad. Were they about to break that promise because difficulties had come into the struggle? Was it possible that they were going to declare themselves beaten in the attempt to overcome? Were they about to choose the easy, comfortable physical life and shun the agony of the spiritual conflict with evil forces? Were they about to run away from duty as cowards? Was it duty to remain in Conrad? How about his duty to the temperance conflict? If he had any real strength that way, ought he to abandon the cause at this critical time? But how could Dorothy live

this life of privation? How could he go on with his meagre salary, humiliated by being in debt to the tradespeople, and dependent for his living on the spasmodic giving of the churches, that "endorsed" Home Missions, to be sure, but left the Home Missionary often unpaid, or the recipient of boxes which sometimes were so clearly in the nature of charity that no self-respecting man could take and use the contents?

All this, and more, crowded into Malcom's mind as he stood there that night by the ruins of his church and home. The same thoughts were also in the mind of Dorothy, and with it all it seemed, too, as if to both of them came a half-suppressed doubt as to the course Malcom was on the point of taking.

"Don't you feel that we have tried our best to keep that promise we made that night in the church?" Dorothy asked, as she nervously pushed her foot against one of the stones at the corner of the foundation.

Malcom did not answer at first. Then he said evasively, as if he had been thinking of something else: "I'm sure I can do as much with my pen as I can in a church."

Dorothy did not look up or speak for some time. Then she said with rather eager emphasis:

"Why not write at once to the editor, and tell him that you will accept his offer?"

"I will," said Malcom, in a low tone.

They stood a little while longer by the ruins, and

then turned away and went home. Somewhere in the great spaces of the infinite, to Malcom and Dorothy it almost seemed as if a sigh from an angel of light breathed over the sleeping town that lay on the blackened surface of the prairie. What they felt was the inner uneasiness of spirit that the promise they had made three years before had been, if not broken, at least not lived out as it might have been. In Malcom's heart, as he said to Dorothy "I will," there was a distinct uncertainty of feeling. There was a lack of spontaneous joy at his action which he knew well enough meant that somewhere he had not been true to the best that was in him.

Nevertheless, in the morning he wrote the letter in answer to the editor, accepting the position, and asking him to give him time to sever his relations with the church, &c.

He took the letter and went out early after breakfast to mail it. He would hand in his resignation at the week-day church meeting, and write to the superintendent later in the day.

He was thinking it all over as he neared the main street, when a farm wagon drove up noisily and stopped near him.

"Oh, Mr. Kirk, will you come right out to The Forks with me? Phil is in a terrible way, and has been calling for you all night!"

It was Mrs. Barton, and her thin, eager face looked down at Malcom as she sat there looking at him anxiously.

Into Malcom Kirk's heart there came a distinct shock, almost as if he had been detected in doing a selfish thing. Here, again, was this appeal for help coming at a time when it seemed to him as if the burden he was carrying was too great for him.

He looked up at Mrs. Barton.

"Why, certainly, I'll go right out with you," he said, every instinct of helpfulness in him rising and going out towards the cry for help.

Just then, Carver came walking by. Kirk had the letter he was going to post in his hand.

"Say, Carver, will you mail this letter for me as you go by the office?" Malcom asked, and Carver eagerly took the letter, more than willing to do Mr. Kirk a favour.

Malcom at once got up into the wagon with Mrs. Barton, and they drove out of town rapidly. Carver stood watching them a moment, then he turned and went on down the street. At the first saloon he hesitated, but finally went in. Before noon, he had gone into three or four different saloons that lay between him and the post-office, and the letter remained in his pocket forgotten.

On their way to The Forks, Malcom learned from Mrs. Barton that while Philip was on his back unable to leave his bed, one of the farmer boys living on the next ranch had brought out several bottles of whisky and smuggled them into the house. The result was that young Barton was having delirium tremens while in the terrible condition caused by his

debauch at the time of the great fire. His mother had spent a fearful night with him, and at last, desperate and heart-broken, dry-eyed, but weeping her blood away within, she had come into town for Kirk.

"It is all of the devil, this drink business!" groaned Malcom, as he went into the house and into the room where Phil Barton lay.

Never, in all his life, had Malcom Kirk seen such a sight. Barton knew him as he came in, and he spoke his name. Then he began to curse in the most awful manner. The lower part of his body was paralysed, but his arms moved incessantly, and his head rolled backwards and forwards on the bed while he shouted out the most blasphemous language.

Malcom put Mrs. Barton out of the room and shut the door. Then for three hours he spent the most trying period he had ever known, by the side of a suffering and sinful human being. At the end of that time, Barton lay quiet, and Malcom was weak and trembling, wet with perspiration and unnerved as if he had been facing some great peril. The doctor came just as Malcom went to tell Mrs. Barton that Phil was sleeping. She had not been able to find any physician when she had gone into town that morning, and had left word for one to come out.

"What is going to become of my boy, Mr. Kirk?" Mrs. Barton asked as he was getting into the doctor's buggy to go back with him.

Malcom had not the heart to say anything at first. In his soul a profound horror and a divine indignation against the saloon greater than he had ever known, had risen.

At last he said: "Mrs. Barton, I hope to live to see the day when your boy will not be near this temptation. The saloon and all it represents is an enemy of mankind. We will not cease to work, and pray, and suffer until the curse of it is removed from our life as a State." For the time, he had forgotten he was going away.

"Promise me, Mr. Kirk, that you will do what you can for Phil? There's no one living he thinks so much of. You saved his life. Save his soul, too. Don't give him up, will you, Mr. Kirk?"

Malcom trembled. How could he tell this wretched, heart-broken woman, living in that desolate, ruined home that he had already made his plan to leave Conrad. She clung to him as the largest and only hope for her boy that she knew. What could he say to her?

The doctor, who had been listening sympathetically, but in silence, had gathered up his reins, and the horses impatiently made a movement to start, and still Malcom Kirk said nothing.

"I know you won't give him up, Mr. Kirk. If you don't save him, no one else will. Don't you think he's worth saving?"

She stood by the buggy and laid her thin, worn hand on Malcom's arm. As he looked at it, he

thought of some old verses he had read while in the Seminary, about a mother's hands :

“ Not all the ladies in all the lands,
With riches, and titles, and fame,
Could boast of such beautiful, shapely hands,
As one that I could name.

Her hands were without a jewelled ring,
And the fingers were thin and old,
But a baby's fingers would round them cling,
More precious than solid gold.

My mother has passed this earth away,
To the land where death cannot be ;
But I'll never forget her, as she lay,
Hands clasped in prayer for me.”

They were old verses that some one had translated hastily from a German text, but Malcom remembered them, and they came to him vividly just now.

“ Of course I believe he is worth saving,” said Malcom.

Mrs. Barton looked up to him again, appealingly.

“ You won't give him up, will you ? ”

“ No, I won't give him up,” replied Malcom, but he hardly seemed to realise what the words meant. Was he not planning to go away from all this burden-bearing ? Had he not already written the letter accepting the place where he would be free to use his pen without this constant struggle to help the lives of others in this personal contact with them ?

CHAPTER XII.

THE BATTLE FOR PROHIBITION.



ALL the way back to Conrad his mind was at war. He knew, deep down in his soul, that he had no joy in the change he had planned to make. He knew well enough that his call to the ministry did not mean a ministry with the pen, but with the voice, and in the personal, living, hand-to-hand touch with humanity.

He knew it when he said to Dorothy, there by the ruins, "I will." He knew it as he penned the letter that even now, he supposed, had started on its eastward journey. He knew it as he felt the touch of the sorrowful mother's hand on his arm. And no reasoning or self-persuasion could convince him otherwise, or satisfy him that he had made a decision that his conscience could approve.

The doctor had a patient at the lower end of the town near where they drove in on the way back, and Malcom left him there and started to walk home. As he went up the main street, past the saloons, Carver came staggering out of one of them.

The sight of the minister seemed to sober the man a little. He muttered, "How do, Mr. Kirk," and was shambling on, when he suddenly stopped as if he had remembered something, and ran back to Kirk, who had gone sadly on, sick at heart at the sight of him.

"Something of yours, Mr. Kirk. Letter you gave me to keep. No trouble to keep it. Glad to do favour," Carver stammered, his drunken brain proud of his apparent service to the minister.

He pulled out the letter Kirk had given him, and handed it over. Malcom took it mechanically, without a word. Carver stared at him, and as Kirk walked away he scratched his head and muttered :

"Sumpin' wrong with the minister, evidently." He shook his head in perplexity, and finally zig-zagged into a saloon to see if he could clear up the mystery with a fresh drink.

Malcom thrust the letter down into his pocket, and walked on like one in a dream. He went by the post-office without looking up. He met several of his parishioners, and answered their good day absently. He was going over the struggle he had experienced when his baby died, only this was a new form of it. Now, Dorothy was the person he was thinking of most. He was in the habit of making up his own mind quickly. If he ever did anything that his whole soul could not rejoice in, he felt suspicious of it; he felt suspicious of his whole motive now in leaving Conrad. And Philip Barton, — was that soul laid on him to rescue? Was it true that he must assume the

salvation of that particular individual and count him one of the lost souls he had really pledged himself to save? And this letter that had come back to him, was he to take the event as a leading of the Spirit and interpret it all to mean that he was not to send it after all? But Dorothy, how could he ask her to lead the life of hardship she must lead, if they remained in this Home Missionary field? After he had gone over all the grounds for going or leaving, he came back to that final question. And his mind was in a tumult.

He was within a few yards of the house now, and still walking on absorbed, when some one touched his arm. He looked up and saw one of his church members, one of the poorest men in his congregation.

"How do you do, Mr. Kirk? Wife and I have been talking over what we could do towards helping on the new church parsonage, and we have concluded to give this as our share." The man handed to Kirk a ten-dollar bill. "We're sorry it isn't ten times as much. Our crops failed, you know, along with the sickness and Jim's death last spring. But we want to do something in memory of the boy. His mother——" The man choked, and did not finish the sentence.

"That was a good sermon you gave us, Mr. Kirk, last Sunday. It did us a world of good. We're praying for you at our house. God bless your work among us."

The man was gone, and Malcom stood there holding the money, and it was impossible for him to prevent his mind from trying to guess by what self-

denial, hardship, sacrifice, that ten dollars had been saved. It was a little thing, but the meeting with his poor parishioner profoundly moved him.

He went on slowly, and had almost reached the house, when, as he turned the corner, he came face to face with the superintendent of his Sunday-school. The superintendent was one of the leading temperance workers in Conrad. He had been specially active in the work carried on in the country districts. He was one of Malcom's best friends, one of the comparatively few men with whom he often counselled and one whom he trusted entirely.

"I've just been to the house, Mr. Kirk, to see you. I won't take your time now, but I called to tell you that I was out at the Parker district last night, and the men out there want you to come over to-morrow or next night, if you can. They've never heard you. I'm sure you could do some real good work there. It's needed bad enough. The neighbourhood is made up of young ranchmen who nearly all drink. If you can go, I can send word by one of the men who is driving out there this afternoon."

"Tell him I'll go to-morrow," said Malcom, in a low voice.

"All right. Oh, by the way, Mr. Kirk,"—the superintendent had started on, but he turned round and came back a step—"it may encourage you a little to hear what I overheard in front of Valmer's place the other day. Valmer was out in front of his saloon and he said to one of his customers, 'I don't care for

all the other prohibition cranks in Conrad except that preacher, Kirk. He has a way of getting his church members to believe as he does, and if they begin to vote that way——' I didn't hear any more, but that bit of a speech ought to be encouraging. We will never give up this fight, will we, Mr. Kirk?"

"No, we will never give it up," replied Malcom, with the same feeling at heart that he had when he said to Mrs. Barton, "No, I will never give him (Philip) up."

He walked slowly, and Dorothy knew the moment he entered the room that something unusual had happened. Malcom could never conceal his emotions.

He took out the letter that Carver had given back to him, and held it out to Dorothy.

"It has not been mailed. I doubt if it ever ought to be," he said simply, but his face was pale and his lip quivered under his intense excitement, for he was stirred deeply by the events of the day.

"What does it mean?" Dorothy asked, as she took the letter, looking at Malcom, and letting the letter fall from her hand upon the table near which she had been sitting.

"It means, I think, yes, I am sure, it means that I must stay here. Neither my heart nor my mind have any real joy in the thought of leaving my work here. Dorothy, I cannot leave without seeming to myself, to my church, to the citizens, to all my friends here, to be guilty of running away from duty because of

hardship. I cannot persuade myself that the Lord wants me to preach with my pen. I know as well as if He spoke to me with an audible voice, that He wants me to speak to living men in close contact with them, to bear their burdens near by, to be one of the multitude in the struggle for a better world. Especially I do not dare to silence the conviction within me that I ought to stay by the temperance fight in Kansas just now. The Lord has seen fit to use me to His glory in this great crisis for the cause of home and native land. Dorothy, if I were only rich! If I only had the means to give you what you ought to have!"

The last two sentences were suddenly wrung from him as he sat there watching Dorothy, who had listened in silence, her hands clasped in her lap, and her face, Malcom fancied, cold and hard.

For the first and the last time in his life he was deceived in Dorothy.

She suddenly lifted her head and smiled, while her eyes filled with tears.

"Do you think, do you think, Malcom, that I could ever be proud of you again, ever feel satisfied if you acted a part that was not true to your convictions? Do you think I married you for your money?"

"I always knew you never married me for my good looks," replied Malcom with a smile that revealed inward joy, "and you certainly did not marry me for my money, for I told you at the time that I

hadn't any. But, oh, Dorothy, you know how I long to do and be everything to you, don't you?"

"Yes, I know it very well," Dorothy answered. She had come over to her husband, and the anxious look on his face had given way to one of relief.

She had the letter to the Boston editor in her hand. Malcom took it from her.

"If we are not going to mail this, what do you think we ought to do with it?" he asked, looking at the stove significantly.

"Save the stamp, Malcom," said Dorothy. "You may need it if we are not going to live in Boston."

He tore off the corner of the envelope where the stamp was, and opened the stove door and threw the letter into the fire.

"So that settles it," said Malcom gravely. There was a pause in the little room. "I feel better," he added, looking steadily at his wife.

"Do you?" said Dorothy gently. She kissed him, and they both seemed to remember their promise made in the little church. Dorothy knew well enough that for a man like Malcom to do anything that in the smallest degree contradicted his convictions, meant, for him, continual torture of mind. The minute she saw that his action in leaving Conrad meant that sort of moral conflict, she knew there was only one course open to them, and that was to stay in Conrad and battle out the life that duty called them to live there.

In all this, nothing but the great and trustful

love they felt for each other made possible such a complete and unquestioning change of plans that affected their whole future. Malcom would not have been the man he was if he had not felt constrained to stay in Conrad. Dorothy would not have been the woman she was, if, once seeing that her husband's moral strength depended on this decision, she had attempted to argue him out of it, or had failed to accept the situation cheerfully and once for all.

So, then, these two children of the All Father, having settled thus simply but decidedly this question, faced the life before them bravely and silently, and no one in Conrad knew until years afterwards how near they had come to losing two of the greatest souls that ever came into the place. Malcom never told his church people. He simply picked up the thread of his affection for them where he had seemed for a while to drop it, and went on to love them more and more, and they, in turn, never dreaming of the moral conflict he had been having, grew to love him because they were enduring hardship together.

At the first church meeting held after that eventful night and day in Malcom and Dorothy's lives, Malcom boldly called on his members to rally round the building of a new church.

He read the two letters, the one from the superintendent and the other from the Church Building Society. The members listened in silence. Malcom looked into their faces quietly. They were gathered in the little store room in the main street. Next

door was a saloon, and that Sunday, as on many others, the congregation could hear the clinking of glasses and the drunken laughter of the men at the bar.

"We might as well accept the facts," said Malcom, and as he talked it is certain that the Holy Spirit was present in that little room in wonderful power, as He always is after a temptation and an overcoming. "We shall have to build this church without outside help. You know what my views are about raising money by means of fairs and suppers. I think the Lord will show us a better way. We are all poor together. I do not need to say that I am willing to share this struggle with you. We are not only going to build a house of wood in which to worship, but a church of Jesus which has for its habitation the throne of a human soul. This saloon," Malcom paused, and in the silence every one could hear through the thin wall the noise in the other room; "this saloon represents a destructive force that we as a church must, by God's grace, overcome. How much do we value the church? Are we ready to sacrifice, to go without some necessities even, to build up the Kingdom and destroy the works of the devil? If we are, we can overcome. We can build our church and grow into a power. Let us believe in the power of the Spirit and go on in His might."

During the weeks and months that followed, Malcom had great encouragement in his plans for building. He boldly went to several of the business

men in Conrad, men who were not church members, and asked them to help. They did so, and in many cases came to him before he went to them and volunteered assistance. The spirit of prayer pervaded the entire church. Before spring almost enough money had been raised to build a larger structure than the one that had been burned.

Before that time, however, the temperance agitation had grown into a great tide of feeling in Conrad. Dorothy never forgot the evening Malcom came in, and with a glow in his face that transformed it, exclaimed :

"A telegram just received says the legislature to-day, by the necessary two-thirds vote, passed the resolution to submit a prohibitory amendment to the Constitution! I never cheered for the legislature before, but I propose three cheers, three times three, right away!"

Out in the main street that night the temperance people built an immense bonfire. The band came out and played, and there were speeches and temperance songs. One of the best speeches was by Malcom Kirk. He called attention during it to the fact that the battle had only just begun, that there were nearly two years yet before the people would be called on to vote on the amendment. All the time he was speaking he was conscious that outside the enthusiastic circle of temperance and Christian people was the whisky element, sullen, angry, surprised at the action of the legislature, venomous, just beginning to stir

itself for the two years' struggle. It seemed to Malcom that he could even that night prophesy, in some degree, the Satanic character of the conflict that made Conrad one of the fiercest centres of the fight.

But he was right in saying that the battle had only just begun by the act of the legislature. The weeks and months that followed witnessed some wonderful scenes in Conrad. Now the women of Conrad began to show their power, as they had already been a constant influence for years.

Dorothy suddenly assumed a place she once would never have dared to take. The women in all the other churches, recognising her ability, came to her and insisted that she take the presidency of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union that had been organised a short time before. She did so, at first with fear and trembling, then with a brave, joyful confidence that amazed her and her husband, but the Lord was leading her.

The time passed, and the election day drew near. Night after night before that eventful day when the people of the State were to vote on the question of saloon or no saloon in their commonwealth, the woman's union held street prayer meetings in front of the saloons. Dorothy worked and prayed incessantly. Her great beauty, spiritualised by her suffering, had wonderful influence. Many a young ranchman went away from those prayer meetings vowing to vote for the amendment. The saloon men would come to the doors of their places and eye the groups of kneeling

mothers and wives in sullen amazement. They had cause to fear for their unholy traffic when the women of the State were thus on their knees, calling on God and heaven to help the cause of "Home and Native Land."

The afternoon of that election day, Malcom was suddenly called out to The Forks to see Philip Barton. He had been steadily failing during those two years, and Mrs. Barton sent for Kirk in haste, and he went supposing it might be for the last time.

It was after dark before he came back to Conrad. Philip Barton had died that afternoon, unconscious at last of the prayer that Malcom had offered by the side of his heart-broken mother.

"God of mercy," cried Malcom, as he entered the street that night, "grant that this day's work in our State has killed the power of this enemy that has killed this boy and broken this mother's life!"

The election was over, but no one could predict the result. As Malcom came up the street, it was crowded with men and women. The Christian Temperance Union had been at work all day. It had served a free lunch to all the voters, and now was holding a prayer meeting in front of Valmer's place.

The crowd filled the wide street and overflowed the broad sidewalks. Free whisky had flowed all day. The crowd was full of men who had been drinking, and they were now in a condition to quarrel.

Dorothy was kneeling in the centre of the women. Malcom forced his way up to the edge of the side-

walk in front of the saloon. He had never loved his wife as he loved her now. Her face was glorified by the Spirit's work within. He was conscious of an unusual disturbance behind him, coming from the saloon. There were shouts and oaths, and a pistol shot. But still he continued to gaze at Dorothy, who as calmly as if in her own room, kneeled there while the confusion in front of the saloon increased. And never again in all his life will Malcom Kirk feel the Satanic venom he felt that night in the drink power which on that eventful day faced the prayers and the homes of the women of Kansas.

CHAPTER XIII.

TWENTY YEARS AFTER.



EARLY twenty years had gone by since that night of the election when Dorothy had kneeled in front of Valmer's saloon, in the main street of Conrad, when one evening a well-dressed, distinguished-looking gentleman stepped out of the west-bound express upon the platform.

"Does Mr. Kirk live where he used to?" he asked of one of the loungers at the station.

"Yes, he lives up by the church," was the answer.

The stranger went on down the main street looking about him curiously, and finally stopped in front of a comfortable-looking house close by a good-sized church building.

He went up the short broad walk and rang the bell.

The door was opened by a girl about nineteen years of age, a girl with a great profusion of heavy brown hair, and a face that people had to look at twice before they knew whether she was what is generally called "pretty" or not.

"Is your father at home?" asked the gentleman, smiling. "I am George Wilson, one of your father's old classmates in Hermon."

"Come in," said the girl. "Any one from Hermon is welcome. I've heard father speak of you often."

"This is Faith, is it?" he asked, as he entered a pleasant sitting room.

"Yes, sir," she answered shyly. "Excuse me, I'll call father."

She went out of the room, and the Rev. George Wilson, of the famous Institutional Church of Boston, looked around him, and his look was full of the most absorbing interest.

What he felt and thought can, perhaps, best be told in a letter which he wrote home two days afterwards, while sitting in the guest chamber of the parsonage. The letter threw much light on the events of the past twenty years, and is of value as coming from one who saw Malcom Kirk and his family at this time, both as a friend, and also as an intensely interested spectator of a very remarkable life.

"I am sitting in Malcom Kirk's house," the letter began, "and it is difficult for me to realise all that that fact means. There is no question in my mind that Kirk is, in some ways, one of the most remarkable ministers in this country, and yet he and his talented wife have remained in this comparatively obscure place for over twenty years, working quietly and without ostentation, with some most astonishing

results, until lately unheard of by the churches in the east.

"Since I was in Conrad about twenty years ago, great changes have occurred in the State. Perhaps the greatest change of all has been the prohibitory amendment to the Constitution. Every one knows that the election on the Legislature's Act to submit the amendment resulted in an affirmative vote. Every one also knows that the people have never reversed that decision, and it seems probable that they never will.

"You will also remember what an excitement was caused by one event in Conrad at the close of that famous election day. I listened to the story from Kirk's own lips, and it was as exciting as any novel I ever read.

"He had been called out of town on the afternoon of that day to see a young man who died of the effects of a drunken debauch, and as he came back to Conrad in the evening, his wife was kneeling in the centre of a group of other women, holding a prayer meeting in front of one of the most notorious saloons then in Conrad.

"He had only just come to the place when a great disturbance broke out in the saloon behind him. Some one broke through the crowd and attempted to throw a bottle of vitriol at Mrs. Kirk. It was afterwards shown that the man was crazy with drink, and awfully excited by the events of the day. He was only partly successful in his horrible attempt. Mrs.

Kirk's face was burned on one side, but a man by the name of Carver, who had been drinking, but was sober enough to realise what was going on, grappled with the other and took away the bottle, receiving dreadful burns in doing so. This man is now the sexton in Mr. Kirk's church, a devout, sincere Christian, and a good example, so Kirk says, of hundreds of men who will remain sober if the saloon is taken away and the constant temptation to drink is absent. And so far as I can observe he is decidedly right in his belief.

"Well, Mrs. Kirk has recovered from those injuries, and her beauty of face, which is still remarkable, is marred only by a scar which gives her, to all who know her history, an added interest. The affair created an intense feeling here for a long time. Nothing so terrible had been known since that attempt to disfigure Mrs. Coleman, of Marville, Canada, while marching with other women in a temperance procession. The event opened many people's eyes to the Satanic power of the drink evil. It was only one out of countless events where the whisky element has stood for the greatest crimes, and for which it must answer heavily at the judgment bar of a long-suffering God.

"It is difficult for me to write of Malcom Kirk without seeming to exaggerate and over-emphasise his work. I want to speak of his beautiful family, which is a part of the best portion of this western town.

"Mrs. Kirk has developed into a woman of rare

power in all the church and social life of the place. Years ago the women here recognised her ability as a leader by making her president of the Christian Temperance Union. It was largely through her efforts that the township polled a very heavy vote for the amendment. She has thrown all her rare talents as a gifted musician, also, into the redemption of the town, with the result that no woman has such an influence as she has on all the young thoughtless life that has crowded in here during the town's rapid growth in the years of eighty-six and seven.

"There are three children, two boys, named Gilbert and Hermon, and a girl, the eldest child, named Faith. The boys are bright, handsome fellows, and take after the mother. Gilbert is seventeen, and Hermon fifteen. Faith, who is nearly nineteen, is like her father. I have not yet been able to tell whether she is what you women would call 'pretty' or not, but she is one of the most interesting girls I ever met. She is fond of trying experiments, and resembles her father in that respect. She wants to know and feel things for herself, and is passionately fond of doing for other people. I begin to get the impression that she is thoroughly unselfish, and that she has the making of a remarkably useful woman. But I predict for her some trying experiences. She is one of those girls who would make her father and mother anxious for her future, if it were not for the fact that they and herself are Christian in their whole nature. That is the salvation of such a girl as Faith,

and Mr. and Mrs. Kirk seem to be peacefully sure of that fact. All the children are members of the church, and all three of them are very evidently proud of their father and of what he has done.

“ You ask, what has Malcom Kirk done ?

“ In the first place, in spite of what seemed like impossibilities, he succeeded years ago in building a church and parsonage, both of which had been burned down, it is supposed by the whisky men, during the fight which went on before the amendment was carried. The church is a comfortable structure, seating three or four hundred people, with several class rooms attached. The parsonage is a good house of eight rooms, fairly well furnished, although Kirk’s peculiar habits of generosity have not permitted anything approaching luxury even in the slightest degree.

“ But the building of the church and parsonage is in one sense the very smallest thing that Kirk has done. It is not too much to say that he and his wife have revolutionised the moral life of this whole town. When they came here about twenty years ago, they found a community of fifteen hundred people. A great amount of lawless, thoughtless life crowded the saloons, the dancing houses, the cheap resorts of amusement. Kirk and his wife, after passing through an experience of great suffering and temptation, most of which has always been unknown even to their own people, came out of their affliction with astonishing power over the life of the place. There is no question that the very thinking of the people here

is shaped by Malcom Kirk's Christianity. The promise he and his wife made when they came here has been constantly in mind. The number of lost men and boys who have been attracted to Kirk's ministry, and to Mrs. Kirk's singing and playing, and led to Christ, is amazing. Even the business and political life of the town has been shaped by Kirk's purpose in life. That means a great deal, as any one will acknowledge. This fact, however, is shown by the common allusions to Conrad by other towns. They speak of it as 'Kirkville.' A higher compliment to a man's influence it would be difficult to find.

"It is, of course, still true that the devil does business in Conrad. Kirk has told me that the whisky men have never ceased from the day they were driven out of Conrad to attempt to come back in some form, and carry on their work. At the present time he tells me that through failure on the part of the officers of the law to enforce the law, the whisky men have grown bold and opened several places. He is right now in the midst of the old struggle again. This time it is a struggle with State and county officials who have broken their oaths of office. It is the same struggle in another form. At the bottom of the whisky business in any State, whether it has a prohibitory statute or not, is the incentive of great financial returns for a very little real labour, and also the human passion for drink, two things which Kirk says must be recognised by the

temperance people and always reckoned upon in the problem of temperance.

"It remains therefore to be said, that so far as Kirk and his wife are concerned, the contest they began here, the battle they entered for victory over the world, still goes on. Is there a place in the world where a Christian may cease from fighting the good fight of the faith? But I am profoundly touched by the extent of overcoming to be seen in this place. I have been unable to silence the question, 'What if every minister, as he entered a new place, no matter how small or difficult, entered it with a passion like Kirk's to redeem the lost part of it, and bring it back to God?' I know this much is true of the work done here. There have been no unusual excitement and no extraordinary means employed to produce the astonishing results. There is no question that Kirk has certain qualities that have helped him. His voice is, as it always was, a fine instrument. He knows how to talk to people, and he writes uncommonly well. But, on the other hand, he is still awkward, homely of appearance, and by no means always at his best. He loves people. He longs, as Paul did, for the salvation of the world. And there lies the secret of his work. It is nothing which other men may not also have. I don't know a minister in our churches anywhere who might not claim all that Malcom Kirk and his wife have claimed. They have overcome the world by means of their love, by following the plain path of duty at the cost of suffering, by

not pleasing themselves. They are still engaged in the struggle. It will never cease this side of death and paradise. But I wish that every pastor and every church might come here and see what has been done and what the future seems certain to record. The most malignant forces of evil have evidently arrayed themselves against Kirk and his wife, and so far these two have overcome them all. Heaven has won the victory out here, and I do not know why it should not do so everywhere. Do we want the world to be saved? Do we have a passion to save it? Do we put the Kingdom first? If we did, should we not see the results everywhere that we see here? I shall return home from my visit to Malcom Kirk with that question sounding in my heart."

There was one brief allusion in this letter which meant even more than Wilson knew. It was his allusion to what he called Malcom Kirk's "peculiar habits of generosity." Indirectly these led to events which have to do with this history of the human conflict against sin, and involved in that growing conflict all the members of Kirk's family.

A few days after Wilson's departure, Faith and her mother were sitting together in the "common room," as Faith called it, the room that the family used for dining and sitting room together. Dorothy was sewing, and Faith was helping her with some work on the boys' suits.

It was about eleven o'clock in the morning, and Malcom Kirk was upstairs in his study. The boys

were at school, and Faith, who had finished the high school, had been staying at home for two years helping her mother.

"Mother, how does Gilbert manage to tear his coat across the back like that?" asked Faith, holding up that garment and looking at it with grave astonishment.

Dorothy could not help smiling, although the next instant she sighed a little.

"He said one of the boys pushed him against a wire fence last Saturday while they were out fishing near The Forks."

"Well, the boy that did it ought to be made to wear it after I have mended it. That would be 'making the punishment fit the crime,'" said Faith, as she stabbed the back of the coat with a big needle and began turning over a basket to find some thread.

"I'm sorry Gilbert hasn't a better suit," said Dorothy, gravely. "He must try to get along with it this autumn, any way. Mend it as carefully as you can, Faith."

"Yes, ma'am," replied Faith. "I am trying to find something besides white silk. At the same time, mother, don't you think white silk on a black background would be a warning to Gilbert not to get his coat torn again?"

Mrs. Kirk laughed, and before she could answer, the bell rang.

Faith put aside the work and went to the door.

"Can I see Mr. Kirk?" asked a voice that Dorothy recognised at once.

"No," said Faith decidedly. "Father is in his study writing, and he ought not to be disturbed."

"But he told me to call to-day, and I want to see him very much."

"Did he tell you to call this morning?"

"Well — no — he said to-day. But I couldn't come at any other time."

There was silence a moment, while Faith stood holding the door uncertainly, but still resolutely blocking the entrance.

Malcom Kirk came out of his study at the top of the upper hall. "Is that Mr. Barnes, Faith? Tell him to come up."

Faith at once stepped aside, and a shabby-looking man came in. As he passed the door of the sitting room, he bowed clumsily, and said, "Good morning, Mrs. Kirk." Then he stumbled noisily upstairs and entered Malcom's study. The door closed, and Faith went back to her work.

CHAPTER XIV.



FAITH LEAVES THE HOME- NEST.

She picked up the coat she was looking at her mother closely, and could see that she was troubled.

"Mother," said Faith, suddenly, "I don't think people ought to impose on father the

way they do. They know he would take everything he has and give it away, if we didn't prevent him, and they just impose on his great-hearted generosity. And you and the boys have to suffer for it."

"Hush, Faith! Your father does what seems to him the wise and Christian thing to do. It is true that everybody in the county comes to him for help. But that is what makes his work what it is. There is no one else they think of that way." Dorothy spoke with the pride of twenty-five years' companionship with the man of her choice. She loved him now with deeper, truer devotion than she had ever known in her younger days.

Faith was silent a moment. "But how can father

afford to give money to people? I don't think he ought to."

Dorothy did not answer at once.

"If people need the help of money more than anything else, how else shall we help them? Sympathy and prayers don't seem to be enough in such cases."

"I think father might make Mr. Barnes a present of a box of soap," said Faith. "I am sure he needs that as much as the five dollars he has come to beg for."

"They are very poor," sighed Dorothy.

"So are we," replied Faith. "Or we shall be, if we always give to everybody."

Dorothy did not answer this, and Faith picked up the coat and worked on in silence. She was evidently planning something serious in her mind. It was not the first time she had ventured to remonstrate about the habit her father had of helping all sorts of people. Until a few years past, Dorothy had not allowed a thought of the matter to disturb her. Malcom's salary was very small still. The most rigid economy was necessary to keep the family expenses within the income. The annual income from his writings now amounted to about five hundred dollars, but a large part of it was given away, and Dorothy faced increasing difficulty each year in managing the household finances.

The study door opened, and Malcom and his visitor came downstairs.

"I am going out for a little while, Dorothy, Mrs. Barnes is very sick, and I am going over there.

Don't wait dinner for me if I'm not back before half-past twelve."

He kissed his wife and went out. Faith and her mother watched the tall heavy figure go out of the yard with the unattractive Barnes shambling after him. Malcom was growing grey, but he was erect and vigorous, in his prime, and to these two women watching him out of the window, he was the best man in the world.

"I'd like to see any one say anything against father!" said Faith decidedly, while an unusual tear came into her eyes. At the same time her mother and herself were wondering how Malcom ever found time to write his sermons or anything else.

Faith stole up to the study and looked at the loose leaves of the sermon on the father's desk. The last words he had written were a quotation: "Whoso giveth to the poor, lendeth unto the Lord."

"Dear old father," said Faith softly, "I'd better let the Lord rebuke him. At the same time we've got to live. Here I am a woman grown and earning no bread, and the boys want to go to college, and mother saving every cent ——"

She went off to her own room that afternoon and brooded. When Faith brooded, something happened. And it was not altogether a surprise to Dorothy when a few days afterwards Faith announced her decision:

"Mother, I have made up my mind to go away and earn something for the family. I've tried every possible place here, and you know how it is."

Dorothy looked at the girl gravely, but did not say anything.

"I have been writing to Grace Holley, who went to Chicago a year ago to learn re-touching in Keffen's studio. She is earning as high as seventeen and eighteen dollars a week. She says there will be a vacancy there soon, and if I apply at once I may get the place. You know I have learned re-touching here, all they can teach me, and I like it. Mother, I can't stand it any longer to remain here at home doing nothing. The boys will soon want to go to college. I never cared about it. I want to be a photographer, or an architect, or a paperhanger, or something useful. If father can spare enough money to get me started, I can be in a position before the year is out to help the family. We never can break father of his habits of helping everybody, and I want to be self-supporting and help the rest, too."

This was a long speech for Faith to make, but it was the beginning of several family conferences, and the end of it all was that one day in the winter of that year, Faith and her father went down to the station and Faith took the express for Chicago. The arrangements had all been completed for her to enter the studio, where she was to receive eight dollars a week to begin with, and promise of rapid increase if the work was satisfactory.

"Good-bye, father. Don't give away your overcoat before you get home, will you?" Faith called out of the window, as the train started.

Malcom Kirk smiled and waved his hand. Then he ran along the platform and handed up an envelope to Faith. She managed to kiss his hand as she took the envelope, and then leaned back in her seat and cried.

When she opened the envelope, a cheque for twenty-five dollars dropped out.

"This is a 'Youth's Companion' my dear. You will find it good company on the road. Your father." This was written hastily in a note with the cheque. Faith understood it was the price of a story Malcom had written for the *Companion* that autumn. She tucked the cheque into her purse, and cried harder than ever.

But when she found herself in Chicago next morning, she set herself resolutely and with courage toward her new life.

The work in the studio was extremely interesting to her. Her letters to the people at home were very entertaining and even funny. But after she had been in the city a few months, she was obliged to face a serious condition, one that she had not anticipated.

In the first place, it cost her nearly every cent of the eight dollars a week to live. But economise as she would, after counting out rent, and fuel, and light, with what her clothes and car fare cost, with everything that must enter into the account of daily existence, she had very little left when Sunday came.

One day she realised, with a shock, that she had been obliged to draw on the twenty-five dollar cheque.

She had used all the money her father had been able to spare. The work in the studio had for several weeks been piece-work, and it happened that business was dull, and several weeks she had been able to earn less than five dollars.

Then came a crisis that she had not counted on. The studio changed hands, and the new proprietor began to cut down expenses and dismiss some of the re-touchers. Faith was one of the latest arrivals, and one evening as she came down to the office from the little workshop under the roof, she was notified that her services would not be wanted after the next week.

She went out of the studio, and instead of taking the car as she usually was obliged to do on account of the distance to her room, she walked on until she was at the corner of Madison and State Streets.

She plunged through that boiling crowd of humanity, and started to walk up State Street the four miles that yet lay between her and her room. And as she walked on, she was deeply thinking of what she would do. The idea of writing home for money was so distasteful that she could not bear to entertain it. Her lips closed firmly, and she said to herself: "I never will do it while I can live. I have made a failure out of it so far here, but I can't burden father and mother just now. I know how matters are going at home with all the expense there, and Hermon's illness last month. No, no. I started out to be a bread-winner. I must earn my own living."

She was suddenly brought to a stop by a crowd that filled up the sidewalk in front of a large window. There was a picture on exhibition there, and Faith, after running into one or two people, seeing what was the object of attraction, stopped herself, and gradually was pushed up to the window as the crowd went and came.

It was an oil painting with life-size figures, representing the deck of an ocean steamer. A man was holding a baby in his arms, and the baby was looking up into the man's face and smiling. The title of the picture in gilt letters on the frame was simply "Motherless."

It was one of those pictures that appeal to a common humanity, and the crowd on the sidewalk was irresistibly drawn to it. But the effect on Faith was electrical. As soon as she had seen the face of the man on the canvas, she exclaimed aloud, "Why, that's father!"

Those nearest her looked at her in surprise. She checked herself and was silent. But there before her was the likeness of Malcom Kirk as she had seen him in the sketch her mother had often shown her. And the story of the baby whose mother had died in mid-ocean was familiar to all the children at home.

She looked at the corner of the canvas and saw the artist's name, Francis Raleigh. A card in the window announced the fact that the picture was sold, and that the artist's studio was in one of the new blocks in Randolph Street.

Faith slowly pushed out of the crowd and went on her way. But the picture affected her deeply. The sight of the dear father protecting that motherless baby made her cry. And it also strengthened her purpose not to appeal for financial help from home. She could not have told why that feeling accompanied her sight of the picture. But it did, and she determined that she would make every effort to support herself without help from home.

The end of the following week found her without a place, and as she came away from the studio that Saturday evening, she realised, as never before in her life, what it meant to a girl without any friends or a home, to face a great city without work or means. She knew that she could go home at any time, or get help from that source if she asked for it. But what about the great army of unemployed that had not even that resort? She shivered as she turned down towards the great artery of the city's human traffic and was swept along with it.

She went up by the window where the picture was still on exhibition, and there was the usual crowd in front of it.

She stopped again and looked hungrily at it. It was like getting a glimpse into the dear home circle in the parsonage at Conrad.

It was, perhaps, a little strange that she had not entertained the idea of calling at Raleigh's studio and telling him that she was the daughter of his subject in the picture. But Faith was very shy in some ways,

and she simply never thought of trying to meet the artist.

As she stood there this Saturday night, two men in the crowd were talking about the picture. They stood so near her that she could not help hearing what they said.

"It seems too bad to take the picture out of the window."

"We can leave it there another week."

"When do you start west?"

"The last of next month."

"Better leave it here till then."

"I think so, too. But what a force it has, Malcom."

Faith started at the familiar name, and looked up.

The man who spoke was a middle-aged, grey-bearded gentleman, and the man whom he called "Malcom" was, perhaps, twenty-five years old, a stalwart, fine-looking fellow, with something in his face that made Faith puzzle over something foreign there. For an instant their eyes met. Then Faith blushed and moved back out of the crowd, and went on. She did not look back, but she seemed to feel that the two gentlemen were looking after her.

"They are the persons who have bought the picture and will take it away," she said as she walked along. She was sad at the thought, for she had come to cherish the look at the father's face which she had enjoyed every day since she first saw it there.

During the next few weeks Faith had an experience that tried her as she had never been tried.

She visited scores of photographers' studios to get piece-work. In some of them she would find waiting a dozen girls all on the same errand. She proved the value of her work on several occasions, for she had learned to do the re-touching in a superior manner, and still, work as hard as she would, the orders she could get did not equal her expenses, which she had reduced to the lowest possible figures.

She came back to her room one day, after an unsuccessful application for orders in twenty places, thoroughly tired, for she had walked a good many miles, and the streets were running over with mud and snow.

She counted over her money, and, for the first time, realised that she had reached the end. She was determined not to run into debt, although her landlady in the flat had been very kind.

She went down to a little news-stand at the corner and bought an evening paper and looked over the wilderness of "wants," and wondered how, in a city like that, any one ever found anything to do. She envied the butcher's boy who was just coming out of a market near by, and thought of asking him how he managed to get his position, while so many boys were probably without any.

She took the paper to her room and finally settled on one advertisement as offering a possible chance for her.

She had made up her mind for several weeks that she could not make a living by re-touching.

"I'll do it," she said, with a faint flush of colour in her face. "I wonder what mother would say!"

The advertisement was as follows:

WANTED—An American girl to do cooking and general housework. Wages satisfactory. Apply, with references, to No. —, Ellis Avenue.

"If I can get four dollars a week with my board, I can save nearly every cent of it," said Faith, resolutely. "And mother taught me how to cook. I am sure it is as honourable a way to earn a living as working in a store."

There was a bit of adventure in it, also, that attracted her. The thought of Dorothy Gilbert's daughter working out as a "hired girl" gave Faith something of a surprise at herself, but it was a part of her love of experiments that made possible the strange experience she was now about to know.

She went to the studio early on Monday morning, and secured good references. For the rest, she said she would frankly ask the people to try her for a week, at least, and then employ her for what she could do.

She took a Cottage Grove Avenue car, and went directly to the number in Ellis Avenue. It was a large house with a veranda on three sides. She went round to the side entrance and, mounting the steps, rang the bell, her heart trembling a little as she did so.

CHAPTER XV.

FAITH BECOMES A "HIRED GIRL."



HEN the door opened, there stood, facing Faith, a good-looking, well-dressed woman, who was, evidently, the mistress of the house.

"I have come in answer to your advertisement, ma'am," said Faith slowly. She was unexpectedly embarrassed by the woman's silent look.

"Will you come in?"

The woman pointed to a chair, and Faith sat down. It was the dining room, a fine large room, evidently well kept.

"My name is Faith Kirk. I have been at work as a re-toucher in Keffen's studio, and here are some references from that place."

Faith handed them out, and the woman took them and carefully read them. While she was reading, Faith looked about, shyly but observantly. She liked the appearance of the house.

"Have you ever worked in the city?" asked the woman suddenly, as she finished the references.

"No, ma'am. I came here to work in the studio, and lost my position there, owing to a reduction of hands."

"Can you cook?"

"Yes, ma'am," replied Faith, modestly.

"And do the housework for a family of four? There are my husband, and my son and daughter."

"I think I can do it. I am sure I can. I am strong and well." Faith spoke with some pride, for whether she had her mother's beauty or not, she had inherited her parents' splendid physique.

The woman of the house looked at her in some hesitation.

"I don't know you at all," she finally said.

"No, ma'am. I don't know you, either." Faith said it without the least appearance of being impertinent, and after the fashion of Malcom Kirk she looked straight in the other's eyes as she spoke.

The woman coloured at first, and then smiled a little.

"It does seem to be about an even thing, doesn't it? Well, the references are good as far as they go. Would you come for a week on trial? I have generally hired my help in that way."

"Yes, ma'am."

"I am willing to pay three and a-half a week if you can do the cooking. Or even four dollars, if you can do all the work satisfactorily."

"I will come on trial, and if I don't please you, you can dismiss me," said Faith a little eagerly.

There was something about the woman's manner that seemed to her cold and unnecessarily business-like, but, on the whole, it seemed like a desirable place in which to work.

"My name is Fulton. Yours is?"

"Kirk, Faith Kirk."

"Ah, yes. Well, Faith, I'll show you your room. Have you a trunk?"

"Yes, ma'am. At my room." Faith gave her the number.

"I'll send an express man after it." She went to a telephone in the next room and gave the necessary order. Faith had packed up her trunk so as to have it in readiness.

Mrs. Fulton led Faith upstairs to her room, which was a comfortable place, and as they stood there, she talked about the work expected of the "help."

"I suppose you will want your Thursday afternoon and Sunday, after dinner?"

"I suppose so," said Faith, a little vaguely.

Mrs. Fulton looked at her sharply.

"I have always been in the habit of giving my girls that amount of time. Of course, you don't have to take it if you don't want to."

"I should like my Sunday. I want to be able to go to church," said Faith boldly.

"Of course. We have late dinner, say two or half-past. After that, you are at liberty for the rest of the day."

Faith did not say anything, and Mrs. Fulton took

her down to the kitchen, which was furnished in a complete manner that pleased Faith the moment she stepped into it.

"Are you ready to begin work to-day?" asked Mrs. Fulton, after explaining the range, and showing Faith where articles were.

"Yes, ma'am."

"Very well. We have lunch at one. Dinner at half-past six. Mr. Fulton does not come from the city until night. I expect my son and daughter from school always. Can you go ahead and get lunch without any help?"

"Yes, ma'am," Faith answered simply. She had determined to let her work speak for itself. She had her father's self-possession in such matters. Besides, she found herself labouring under a pleasant excitement that stimulated her. She knew she would be able to do her best.

Mrs. Fulton looked at her new help again with some sharpness.

"Where did you say you were from? I mean, before you came to the city?"

"My home is in Kansas."

"That is a good way from Chicago?" Mrs. Fulton spoke in some surprise.

"No farther than Chicago is from Kansas," said Faith, again, after her fashion, looking straight at Mrs. Fulton.

The woman of the house seemed amused this time. She seemed, also, to be on the point of asking

more questions. But finally went out of the kitchen, leaving Faith in possession there.

As Mrs. Fulton sat down in the parlour she sighed, but it was evidently a sigh of relief.

"I never did such a thing before, to hire a girl on such slender knowledge. But she looked clean and intelligent," she said to herself. "And I am so tired of the help I have been having. I expect, of course, to be disappointed in her—I always am. But I'll let her try it for a week, and see."

Mrs. Fulton sighed again, and went upstairs to look after some of the work there, for no matter how many girls she might have had, or how capable they may have been, she was a born housekeeper, and never was satisfied unless she was doing something herself.

Meanwhile, Faith, down in the kitchen, planned and prepared a lunch that was a delightful surprise to the family when it sat down at half-past twelve. She had rightly supposed that Mrs. Fulton was a generous provider, and she found an excellent supply of everything in the larder. Dorothy had taught Faith cooking, and had even gone beyond the simple, plain cooking ordinarily common to the life in the parsonage. It was not a difficult thing, therefore, with the supply before her, for Faith to produce a dainty and appetising lunch.

When she rang the bell a few minutes before the time, the boy, who had been in the library, came in and sat down at once. Mrs. Fulton, who had not been able to keep out of the kitchen altogether, in

spite of her determination to let the new girl manage alone, sat down with a feeling of surprise as she viewed the table. The girl, who was about Faith's age, came in from the parlour, where she had been playing exercises on the piano, and the lunch proceeded with many favourable compliments, especially from the boy, who had brought home with him a school-boy's appetite.

"Say, this salad is all right," said the young gentleman, as he passed his plate for the third time. "Hope you'll keep this new girl for life."

"She certainly has done very well for the first time. I expect it will wear off soon. We never had a girl yet that kept it up very long," said Mrs. Fulton. She rang the bell for something, and Faith came in. It was the first time the boy and girl had seen her.

She was somewhat embarrassed, but she served something on the table quietly and gracefully. Something in her manner seemed to attract the girl, who, after a moment of awkward silence, said :

"Mother, you have forgotten to introduce Roy and me."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Fulton with a shade of annoyance. "Yes, this is my daughter, Alice, and my son, Roy—Faith—what did you say your other name was?"

"Kirk—Faith Kirk."

"Yes, Kirk. You can bring in the dessert now, Faith, if you have any. Have you?"

"Yes, ma'am," replied Faith. She could not help looking at the other girl with interest. She was pale

and did not seem to be very well. She was the extreme opposite of her mother, evidently. There was a pleasant smile on her face as she nodded to Faith, and Faith would have been a very stupid girl if she had not noticed the look and been warmed at the heart by it.

"Wish you would leave that salad here," said Roy, as Faith was about to take it off the table.

"Roy," said his mother, sharply, "you have had all the salad that is good for you to-day. Faith, take it out."

Faith removed the dish, and Roy made a face, and said, "What have you got for dessert? Apple pie?"

Mrs. Fulton rebuked him again, and Faith went out with the dishes. She cleared the cloth deftly, and then brought in the dessert, which to Master Roy's great satisfaction, happened to be a delicious apple pie, made from one of Dorothy's own recipes.

"This is what I call a pie," said Roy, as he attacked a segment which represented about a quarter of the circle.

"It won't be a pie very long, at the rate you are eating now," said his sister.

"There's another, I hope, isn't there?" he asked Faith, anxiously. "I like it cold for dinner."

Faith nodded, and Mrs. Fulton looked sternly at her boy. But she was pleased with the new girl so far. When the lunch was over, and Faith was clearing everything away, Mrs. Fulton and the children were talking about her in the parlour.

"Mother, I'm sure she's not just an ordinary hired girl. She seemed to me like a lady," said Alice.

"You needn't try to spoil her." Mrs. Fulton spoke with a near approach to irritation. "She is apparently a capable girl as far as cooking goes. She may be a failure in other ways."

"The cooking is the main thing," said Master Roy, as he strapped his books together and started off to school. "That last girl we had didn't know how to boil eggs. I vote for the new girl every time."

That afternoon Faith continued with her work, conscious that so far she had pleased the family. When Mr. Fulton came home and sat down to the dinner, he was agreeably surprised, and joined with the rest in praises of the new girl.

"I think you have found a treasure," said Mr. Fulton. "And, if so, we ought to pay her four dollars a week. She is a superior cook."

"By all means, my dear," said Mrs. Fulton. "We can afford to give that to keep her."

When Faith came in to serve that evening, she was startled as she recognised in Mr. Fulton the grey-bearded man who had stood in front of the picture with the young gentleman he had called "Malcom." Evidently, Mr. Fulton did not recognise her, or remember that he had seen her before. He seemed like a man who was completely engrossed in his business. He was generous, and wanted the best of everything, especially on his table. Like the others in his family, he welcomed, with a feeling of relief,

the domestic service which meant comfort and pleasure in the affairs of the kitchen and the table.

At the close of the week Mrs. Fulton felt so well satisfied that she told Faith she would give her four dollars a week to remain. Faith accepted the offer, and in her room that Saturday night she took account of her surroundings with considerable satisfaction.

"I am really making more money than I was in the studio," she said to herself. "Nearly all I make now is clear gain. I get my board, room, and washing, and that saves a large bill of expense. If I went into a store at five or six dollars a week, and had to pay my board, I couldn't save anything."

She was right about that, for she had come away from home well provided with clothes, and her expenses, outside of board, and room, and car fare, had been almost nothing.

There was one thing that troubled her now, however.

She had not yet written home of her present place of work. She said to herself that she ought to tell her mother frankly how it all came about, and that resolve seemed to give her peace of mind. She would write home to-morrow, Sunday, afternoon.

But when Sunday came, several things happened through the day to disturb her.

In the first place Mrs. Fulton informed her that they were to have company for half-past two dinner, and Faith knew that meant a hard forenoon's work.

"It doesn't seem right for people to have company to dinner on Sunday," she said to herself, as she cleared away the breakfast dishes and proceeded to wash them while the family went into the parlour for Sunday morning prayers.

The kitchen door had been left a little ajar, and presently Faith could hear the piano. Mr. Fulton never had family worship during the week. He was too busy to stop for it in the morning. But Sunday he held to the custom which his own father had strictly observed back in New England, not only in the morning of every day, but at night as well.

Alice was playing. The family had read a passage from the Bible in turn, and now, before the prayer, they were singing.

"Welcome, Sweet Day of Rest," floated out through the dining room into the kitchen, and Faith paused as she wiped a dish, and to tell the truth, a very hot tear dropped down into the dish water. She had not been asked to unite with these Christian people in worship, and for a moment an angry, hard, rebellious spirit stirred in the girl as she listened to the familiar hymn. It was one the family at home often sung at prayers on Sunday.

Mr. Fulton kneeled to pray. He was a trustee in a large and fashionable church, had a class in the Sunday-school, and was considered to be a strictly honourable, exemplary Christian man. It never crossed his mind that the servant in his kitchen could possibly need or want a little worship with

other Christian people. As for Mrs. Fulton, she had never invited her help into the parlour for such services. It was her theory and practice that it was best not to encourage familiarity with the "domestic." Alice was troubled over the matter, and had, in fact, once or twice timidly said something, but Mrs. Fulton silenced her objections always by saying, "The girls never want to come in to prayers. So what is the use of asking them?"

In the kitchen of the Fulton mansion that Sunday morning, while the family was all away at church, a struggle was going on that would possibly have startled the complacent doctor at Mr. Fulton's church as he preached beautifully from the text, "There is no respecter of persons with God."

CHAPTER XVI.

FAITH FIGHTS A BATTLE AND "OVERCOMES."



FAITH Kirk was having one of her great battles as she worked over that Sunday dinner. And she had not fought it out when the family returned, bringing with them four friends of Mr. Fulton, business acquaintances from other cities, whose good will it was necessary to keep.

The dinner was served promptly, and Faith had no reason to feel afraid of her success. Mrs. Fulton even came out into the kitchen when it was over and complimented her on the dinner.

The guests lighted cigars and retired to the library with Mr. Fulton. It was now nearly four o'clock. By the time everything was cleared away in the kitchen it was half-past four, and in the short winter day, dark already.

Faith went up to her room tired and rebellious. She sat down, and at first said she would not go to church. Then she thought of the dear home circle, and for almost the first time since she came away, she grew dreadfully homesick.

She threw herself down on her bed in the dark and had a good hard cry.

When it was over, she felt somewhat ashamed, and lay still awhile thinking. Then she rose and suddenly turned on her electric light.

"Faith Kirk, you are ashamed of yourself. Is this Malcom Kirk's daughter?" She asked the question as she put on her cloak and hat and resolutely determined to go to church and be a good Christian in spite of her troubles.

"To him that overcometh," the verse happened to be the subject of the Endeavour Meeting that very night, and as she took up her Bible and went out of the house, she was feeling better as she started down the avenue and then turned towards one of the churches of the same denomination as the one at home. For she was homesick enough to feel that she would enjoy the worship better in such a church.

Faith's Sundays in Chicago since she had been there were not at all like the Sundays at home. She had at first tried to attend a church near her boarding place. But at the end of her studio experience she had found some Sunday work to do in connection with one of the Social Settlements. That work was now too far away, and she was compelled to give it up.

To-night, she said she would go to the Endeavour meeting in the large church only a few yards from Mrs. Fulton's. She had seen the notice on the outside of the building, giving six o'clock as the hour of service.

The young people held their meeting in the chapel or prayer meeting room adjoining the main room. It was beautifully lighted and furnished, and as Faith went in she was greeted at the door by a young woman, who gave her a card and a hymn book, and then showed her to a seat.

The meeting began promptly, and Faith could not help wondering a little as she looked around at the very well dressed young men and women, how much any of them knew about the struggle of overcoming. The next moment she rebuked herself for judging others.

"They all have their trials, no doubt," she said. "It won't do to judge from appearances. Rich folks are not the happiest ones."

She enjoyed the singing, and some of the more familiar Endeavour songs brought tears to her eyes.

When the hour was about half gone, Faith had an impulse to give her testimony. She kept saying to herself that what she had been through that day was something that might help the others. In her father's church at home the young people had always been encouraged to help one another by relating their experiences, and Faith had no other thought in mind when she rose during a pause and told very frankly something of her struggle that very day.

The young people all turned and looked at her in surprise. Faith knew how to express herself very well. Her father had helped her very much. She did not mean to exaggerate her difficulties, but

she spoke more frankly than she might if she had not been overflowing from the day's experience. Besides, her heart warmed to find herself in the society once more, and she longed for the Christian fellowship.

When she sat down she had time to think if she had said anything she ought not. She had simply confessed her struggle as the Bible said Christians ought, and she had only incidentally mentioned the fact that she was working out. At home, they had girls in the society who worked out at service and they did not think much about it.

But before the meeting was over she grew hot and cold by turns as she thought of having told all those young people that she was a "hired girl." She was almost tempted to get up again and tell them that she was the daughter of a minister and a high school graduate, and that her father had more than one letter from the pastor of the very church where she now was, commending the work done in Conrad and asking for counsel as to similar work in the great city. Then she glowed with shame for her lack of courage. "If I did tell them what I am doing, it is no disgrace! It is an honest thing to do. I am not ashamed of it."

In spite of all that, when the meeting was over, Faith fancied that the girl who had been sitting next to her turned away very hurriedly without trying to speak to her. The one who had ushered her to her seat, however, came to her and introduced her to a girl standing near by. The girl shook hands rather stiffly, and then excused herself, saying she had some

committee work to do. Faith was left standing alone, and no one else spoke to her. She tried to believe that there was no intention in the neglect. But her face burned, and she finally resolved to go out, to shake the dust of that church from her feet, and never return to it.

She had reached the door, when the face of her father came up before her, the patient, loving, long-suffering father at home, who had, to Faith's own knowledge, endured for years numberless privations and slights without losing his Christian manhood or courage. With the face of her father also came another, the Master's, as Faith remembered it from one of the pictures she had at home of Christ in Gethsemane.

"This is not overcoming," she said to herself, and at the door of the chapel she stopped, walked back to the church door entrance, and went into the main room.

An usher showed her to a good seat, and she sat there with her head bowed for fifteen minutes before the service began. When she raised her head, her eyes were wet with tears, and the people near her looked surprised. But Faith had overcome. She had fought another battle on that eventful Lord's Day, and had won the victory.

When the service began she enjoyed it. The singing was by a quartette, and to Faith in her present condition the music was refreshing. The sermon helped her too. It was on the subject of Christ's

sufferings, and she felt ashamed as she listened and compared her own troubles with those of the great Sufferer for the sins of a whole world.

At the close of the service she hesitated, but finally went up to the front of the church and introduced herself to the minister.

He was one of the Chicago pastors who had known her father when he was in the Seminary. They were not in the same class, but had corresponded a little of late years.

"What!" he exclaimed, as Faith spoke her name. "Miss Kirk, of Conrad! My dear!" he called to his wife, who was near by, "this is Malcom Kirk's daughter. You remember his stories in the *Companion*. Our boys think there are no stories just like his. We are so glad to see you!"

The minister's wife greeted her very kindly, and Faith almost cried, she was so touched by their cordial reception.

"Where are you stopping in the city?" the minister asked.

Faith hesitated, and then frankly told him where she was and what she was doing. There was a moment's look of surprise on the faces of the minister and his wife, but they were genuine Christians, and without asking any more questions, the minister's wife said, as she laid a loving hand on Faith's arm:

"My dear, come and take tea with us next Sunday evening at five. Don't fail, will you?"

She gave Faith their house number, and Faith

walked out of the church feeling as if some Christianity were left in that great sinful city after all.

That night she wrote home a long letter to her mother, telling her all about her work, and especially the experience of that day. When she finished it, she prayed for blessing on all the dear home circle, and in greater peace of soul than she had known for a long time, she committed herself to the care of the All Father.

As the week's work begun again, the Fultons found themselves wondering how long the new girl's capabilities would hold out. Faith combined her father's physical endurance and her mother's New England thrift and neatness. Her kitchen shone with brightness. Her meals were delightful surprises to every member of the family. Her good nature seemed unailing.

"We've got a real treasure," even Mrs. Fulton confessed on Wednesday evening to her husband. "The only thing I dread is that she may not hold out. I have never been satisfied with any girl I ever had."

"Perhaps you expected too much," Mr. Fulton suggested, absently, as he continued to read his paper.

"I'm sure we pay enough to get satisfactory help," she replied. "If the capable American girls would only work out more, we housekeepers should not have so many trials." Mrs. Fulton sighed, but it is possible if she had changed places with Faith that Sunday she might have understood better why more American girls do not work out at service.

Thursday morning Mrs. Fulton went down to the city to do some shopping, and Faith was alone in the house. She started her kitchen work early, and then went into the parlour to sweep and dust.

The piano was open, and one of the new marches was on the rack where Alice had left it. She had been practising it that morning before she went away to school.

Faith had received a good musical education from her mother. The piano at home had been one of the few expensive things that Dorothy had kept and taken with her when she left her home in the east. Faith was like her mother in having a real passion for music, and she had a more than ordinarily good ear, and her technique was almost professional.

She had not had an opportunity to touch a piano since leaving home. The sight of the open key-board and the new music fascinated her. Gradually she neared the piano as she was dusting the furniture, and finally she sat down on the stool and began dusting the keys.

The sound of the notes as her cloth pressed on the ivory seemed to make her forget her surroundings.

She changed the dusting cloth to her left hand and struck a few chords with her right. The instrument was in fine tune, and before she knew what she was doing, she had dropped her cloth on the floor and began the opening measures of the march before her.

After a few attempts, the music began to come to her. The march was not difficult, and she was

fairly caught by its popular swing and rhythm. She forgot where she was, and what she was, a "hired girl," who was not supposed to know anything about pianos and marches. Her fingers seemed to regain their old nimbleness, and she was swept on into the piece with an enthusiasm and pleasure she had not known for a long time.

But just as she had finished the music with a splendid close, and felt the glow of the effort, she was conscious of some one in the room.

She turned round with a face that burned, and saw, standing at the entrance of the hall into the parlour, three persons.

They were Mrs. Fulton, who stood staring at her with a cold, stern look, Alice, who seemed astonished at the performance, and the young man whom Mr. Fulton had addressed in front of the picture in State Street as "Malcom." They had come in unexpectedly, and all three had evidently been standing there for some little time. There was an expressive silence in the parlour as Mrs. Fulton came a few steps into the room and confronted Faith, who still sat on the piano stool looking at her.

CHAPTER XVII.

FRANCIS RALEIGH AND FAITH
BECOME ACQUAINTED.



RS. FULTON was first to speak.

"When you are through playing the piano, you can go on with your work," she said, coldly.

Faith stooped and picked up the dusting cloth, and then rose to her feet.

"I didn't hurt your piano;" the words were on her lips, and her heart was hot within her. But she choked the words down, and without replying to Mrs. Fulton, she started to go out. Even in her excited condition of mind, she could not help noticing that the young man was gazing at her with great attention.

"It is not your place to touch the piano," continued Mrs. Fulton, who was angry. "You can leave it alone after this."

"Mother!" Alice spoke up in a tone of timid remonstrance. "There has been no harm done, has there? She plays better than I do. I never knew before how that march ought to sound."

"You're right about that," said the young man, in a big, hearty voice. "It was finely done, and I've heard it played by the band, too."

Faith coloured to her hair at the unexpected praise, while Mrs. Fulton shut the piano with a bang and looked extremely annoyed.

"You can finish your work here some other time," she said to Faith, sharply.

Faith went out of the parlour without having said a word. She was glad when she reached the kitchen that she had controlled herself, but the effort not to say something in defence, to excuse her action, cost her a tremendous struggle. As she prepared the midday meal, she choked several times with a dry sob as she realised that she must not try to be anything but a hired girl while employed in that capacity.

"This isn't the work I ought to do," she said to herself again and again. "But I am doing the best I can. I wouldn't have touched the piano if I hadn't forgotten myself at the sight of the music. If I can get anything else to do, I won't stay here. But what can I do, unless I give up everything and go home? I won't do that until I have to."

Then she quieted her excitement by recalling the home circle. Her father's face came up before her, and she said: "I am selfish to mind such a thing. For dear father's sake!"

When she appeared at the table in answer to Mrs. Fulton's ring of the bell the first time, she

showed no signs of temper, and served quietly and cheerfully. Mrs. Fulton looked at her sharply several times, but apparently found nothing in the girl's face to annoy her. The only embarrassing feature of the meal to Faith was the fact that several times she was conscious that the young man, Malcom, was looking at her very directly. It was not a stare, but it embarrassed Faith, somewhat. His face was honest and manly, but the look he often turned towards her was very searching.

She was relieved when the meal was over and she could clear things away. It was Thursday afternoon, and she very quickly put her kitchen to rights and, running up to her room, she put on hat and cloak and went out. She determined to have another look at the picture in State Street if it were still there. And if it was gone, a plan had suddenly come to her mind which she had resolved to try before going back to the Fultons'.

She had been gone out of the house only a few minutes, when a conversation occurred in the parlour which would have interested her intensely if she could have heard it.

The young man, Malcom, had been ill-at-ease all through the lunch time. When it was over, he had gone into the library, where he had asked leave to write a letter. He was evidently a business acquaintance of Mr. Fulton's, but the conversation at the table revealed the fact that he had not been in the Fulton home before.

He finished his letter, and went into the parlour. Mrs. Fulton and Alice were there. The girl had not gone to school, on account of not feeling well.

"I am sorry that Mr. Fulton did not come home this noon, Mr. Stanley," said Mrs. Fulton, who seemed anxious to please him. "I am sure he must have been unavoidably detained in the city. He telephoned in the early part of the forenoon that he would try to meet you here. I know he wanted to see you before you go west."

"Yes, madam," replied Malcom Stanley. He spoke respectfully, but one who knew him well would have said his tone lacked heartiness. He was evidently very much disturbed about something.

He walked to the window and looked out. Alice went over to the piano and opened it. She sat down and played a few bars of the march. Often when she was feeling miserable, a little music would relieve her.

The sound of the piano roused Malcom Stanley. He came back to the middle of the room, and taking a seat near Mrs. Fulton, he said, with some emphasis, as if he had been making up his mind to a course:

"Mrs. Fulton, where does your—girl—the girl who waited at the table, who was playing the piano—where did she come from? What is her name?"

Mrs. Fulton looked surprised, and also embarrassed.

"She is from Kansas, I believe she told me. Her name is Faith. What is the girl's last name, Alice, I never can remember it?" She called to Alice.

Alice stopped playing, and turned round on the piano stool.

"Kirk, Faith Kirk."

"Oh, yes ; she's a peculiar girl in some ways, Mr. Stanley, as no doubt you noticed. It is not often that we housekeepers can furnish superior musicians to entertain guests," she added with a short laugh, which showed that she still thought of the incident of Faith at the piano with great annoyance.

But Malcom Stanley had risen, his whole expression betraying great excitement.

"If this girl's name is Kirk, Mrs. Fulton, and she is from Kansas, it is almost certain that she is the daughter of the man who was with my mother when she died in mid-ocean ; the man who held me in his arms ; the man who has always been in my thought as one of the heroes of the world."

Mrs. Fulton rose, looking bewildered. She was familiar with Francis Raleigh's painting, but she had never thought of associating Faith with it.

"I must see her," said Malcom Stanley. He spoke like one who has the right to command.

"I think she has gone out," said Mrs. Fulton. "Alice, will you go and see?"

Alice went out, and soon came back saying that Faith had gone. Malcom Stanley paced the parlour in unusual agitation of manner.

"If this is the daughter of Malcom Kirk——" he said to himself. Then he turned to Mrs. Fulton and bowed formally.

"You will excuse me, madam, if I take my leave now. I am obliged to make some arrangements about the picture at Mr. Raleigh's this afternoon."

"When do you leave for the west?" Mrs. Fulton asked. She was annoyed at the events of the day.

"I had planned to go to-morrow. I expect to visit Mr. Kirk on my way to Denver. But I feel anxious to see Miss Kirk before I go. She certainly must be his daughter. A 'hired girl,' as you call them, would not be likely to have such a musical education, and, besides, she has the look in her face of the portrait. It must be she."

"Yes," cried Alice, her pale face showing some colour under the excitement of such a discovery in real life. "She certainly played the piano like one who has had the best of teachers. And, besides, you can see from her manner that she is refined and lady-like." Alice spoke with a glow of unselfish feeling, and Malcom Stanley looked gratefully at her.

"I may come with Mr. Fulton this evening," he said.

He bowed and went out, leaving Mrs. Fulton and Alice to talk over the matter, while he went down to Francis Raleigh's studio, determined every moment, with increasing resolve, to return and see Faith before the day was over.

Meanwhile, Faith had gone directly to the familiar window in State Street, where the picture had been.

She knew before she reached the place that the picture was gone, because the usual crowd of people

was not there. She stopped in front of the window, however, and read the address of the artist which was attached to a small scene of a foreign sea-port. She hesitated a moment, and then resolutely went on to Randolph Street, to the house where Raleigh's studio was.

His room was at the top of the building, and when she reached it, she hesitated again before going in. When she finally opened the door, she drew back at the entrance, for the room appeared to be empty, except for a large canvas and a few decorations. There was another room opening from the first, and after waiting a moment, Faith went on to the door of that room.

A man was sitting there with his back to the entrance, so absorbed in his work that he evidently had not heard her come in. But Faith was at once attracted by the sight of the familiar picture of the father, which was on a great easel in front of the artist.

She came a few steps farther into the room, and still the artist did not look up, and it was only when Faith had advanced as far as the frame of the picture of her father that he turned his face and looked at her.

"I am Faith Kirk, and that is my father," said Faith, speaking directly, after Malcom's own manner, and pointing at the portrait. "I've come on a rather peculiar errand, Mr. Raleigh, but you won't blame me for it, I am sure."

"Blame the daughter of Dorothy Gilbert!" cried Francis Raleigh. His once heavy black hair was streaked with grey, and he had grown more noticeably old in many ways, but he was a handsome and well-preserved gentleman, and the old Raleigh manner sat on him with even more grace than when he was young.

He rose and bowed with an elegant politeness that brought the colour to Faith's cheek, and for a moment they stood facing each other in silence. Then Raleigh brought a chair and Faith sat down, while the artist looked at her with great and increasing interest.

"I suppose you have come to take me to task for painting this picture," he said. "It was in one sense a very bold thing for me to do. I think, however, your father will forgive me. I am sure he will when he knows all about my reasons for doing it." He spoke in a tone that made Faith feel somehow that the picture had had a real influence on the life of the artist, and, indeed, it had, and the telling of it at another time revealed the fact that Francis Raleigh had gone through an experience of moral struggle that had left him also victor in overcoming.

"I'm sure father would be pleased," said Faith, slowly. Then she paused, for suddenly one of her shy spells came over her, and she did not know how to go on. For the first time she seemed to feel as if perhaps her errand would be considered unusual.

"What can I do for you?" said Raleigh. He

spoke in a way that removed Faith's shyness at once. If it had not been for that she would have gone away without telling him what she had come for.

"Of course," he continued, "I am wondering every minute how you happened to come in here. For your home is in Kansas, isn't it, and I——"

"Will you let me tell you how I happened to be here?" said Faith, feeling more confident in her errand. "I shall have to tell it before you will understand why I have come."

"Yes, tell me your story," said Raleigh, smiling encouragingly. So Faith related her experience in the photographer's studio, and her present place of work at the Fultons', whereat Francis Raleigh opened his eyes a little, but he continued to listen in sympathetic silence.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A HAPPY MEETING IN THE STUDIO.



IS love for Dorothy Gilbert had long ago passed into a memory. He was married now, and had a wife and children whom he dearly loved. But as Faith went on and made her errand to him clear, he thought back in silent wonder of that time when Malcom Kirk had crossed the ocean with him and he had thoughtlessly made the sketch which meant so much now to more than one person.

"And I've come here now," continued Faith as she concluded the story of her experiences, "to see if you would give me a letter of introduction or recommendation to some place where I could do the work that I feel I ought to be doing. I'm very proud. I don't mean that I am in any way ashamed of the housework," Faith's cheeks glowed with sudden colour, "but I am sure I can do something different, something that the world needs more. Sometimes when I look at a picture like that, I feel as if I could, in time, paint something almost as good."

Francis Raleigh bowed, and a pleased smile came over his face. Not all the praise from the art critics of his picture had gratified him so much.

"If I could get a permanent position somewhere, I know I could work up into a place of usefulness. I can do the re-touching, and I like to do it. And in time I might have a studio of my own. There are several successful women photographers here."

"That's true, and I know one or two of them," said Raleigh, thoughtfully. He never knew how much it had cost Faith to ask him what she did. She had no foolish pride that some girls have, and Malcom Kirk had always taught his own children, as well as others, that sometimes the most manly or womanly thing one can do was to receive help to help oneself, but Faith would never have come to Raleigh for such assistance if she had not somehow felt certain that she must have some friendly aid in the great city before she could do what she felt she must do in order to help the dear ones at home as well as herself.

There was silence in the studio for a moment. Then Raleigh said, while the smile on his handsome face lighted up like sunshine :

"How would you like to work in Miss Varney's studio at Kenwood?"

"It would be a beautiful place!" cried Faith with enthusiasm. She knew the famous studio which the richest people in the city patronised, and she had even been out to it twice to solicit orders, but each time

had failed to get anything. It was an ideal place, and she could not help wondering if Raleigh knew anything of her experience there.

"Miss Varney is a niece of my wife," said Raleigh, smiling at Faith again. "Suppose, instead of writing you a letter of introduction, I go out there with you and introduce you in person?"

"That would be beautiful!" cried Faith. Then she grew suddenly shy again, and gazed at the artist half fearfully, as if she felt she might have trespassed somewhat on her knowledge of his old-time affection for her mother.

Raleigh seemed to read her thought.

"My dear girl," he said, with a smile that set Faith's mind for ever at rest, "perhaps you know that once I thought very much of your mother, but she gave her heart to a better man, for which I have never reproached her. How the years have gone since then!"

He was silent suddenly, and his face grew thoughtful. "Let us see. We shall have time to get out there this afternoon. I am at your service. Good-bye to the kitchen, and welcome the vocation you are fitted for. At the same time, I envy the people you are working for, if you are anything like the cook your mother used to be." He laughed so delightfully that Faith joined him, and neither of them heard a step in the other room, or knew any one had come in, until Malcom Stanley stood at the entrance gazing at them.

Raleigh had risen and had laid his palette and

brushes down. At sight of Stanley he exclaimed: "Come in, young giant, and let me introduce someone you ought to know!"

Malcom came slowly forward, looking at Faith, who had risen. Each of them was evidently excited at what was now evident to them both.

"Miss Kirk," said Raleigh, with an emotion he did not try to conceal, "this is Mr. Stanley, Malcom Stanley, whose likeness I have so faithfully reproduced on the canvas there!"

Malcom and Faith faced each other in silence, and then Faith put out her hand.

"Will you shake hands with a hired girl, Mr. Stanley, for father's sake?" she said half shyly, half in the manner she had inherited from Malcom Kirk.

"Will I?" cried Malcom Stanley. The way he shook Faith's hand assured everybody that he had no hesitation on the score of Faith's position. They had all three been suddenly smitten with unusual solemnity, and Malcom's energetic handshake made Raleigh laugh. Faith followed, and Malcom joined in, and the excitement of that sudden meeting passed into question and answer.

"It's a long way from the deck of that steamer to this studio," said Malcom Stanley. "But truth is stranger than fiction, at least any fiction I ever read." And then he went on to give Faith some account of his life since the time when Malcom Kirk had left him with his aunt in London.

The aunt had died when he was two years old,

and he had been adopted into the family of a distant relative, taking the name of Malcom at his aunt's request, in loving memory of his queer nurse. The money that Kirk had raised on board the steamer had been fortunately invested. On coming of age this fund enabled the young man to fit himself for an engineer. He had risen steadily, and had at last been promoted to a place of great responsibility. The company for which he worked had interests in the United States, and Malcom had come over to superintend the opening of some mines in Colorado and New Mexico. His business interests had made him acquainted with Mr. Fulton, and it was through him that he had made the acquaintance of Mr. Raleigh, and finally purchased the picture with the intention of giving it to Malcom Kirk. The artist had insisted on practically giving a large share of the value of the picture to Stanley, and the latter had planned a surprise for Kirk on his way west.

All this, and more, did Faith hear, wonderingly. The short winter day was going by, and Raleigh suddenly interrupted the conversation.

"We shall have to give up our trip to Kenwood to-day, Faith."

"And I must be getting back to my work!" cried Faith, rising. She was like one who has been in a dream of the day. It all seemed so strange—the studio, the artist, the picture, the big, hearty, honest young Englishman. She found it hard to realise that she was actually in the heart of the great,

rushing, prosaic, selfish city. All this was so like a story, like things one reads about but so seldom knows in the real life.

"If your father were only here now," said Raleigh, whose romantic temperament was moved deeply by the events of the day, "this room would contain all the elements of a genuine story."

As he spoke, they all three turned instinctively towards the entrance of the other room. There stood Malcom Kirk, his tall, heavy figure filling up the opening, and his homely, loving face showing unusual emotion.

"Father!" cried Faith, and the next minute she was in his arms sobbing and exclaiming.

Then she stepped back, a little ashamed of her sudden outburst as she remembered the presence of the two men behind her, but she kept hold of Malcom's hand and drew him into the studio.

"How did you come here, father? We had no idea——"

"It is not a long story, my dear," said Malcom. "Mr. Raleigh, how do you do? It's a long time since I saw you on the deck of that steamer." Malcom pointed to the picture, and still his great brown eyes rested on Malcom Stanley, who was standing there pale and excited.

Raleigh took Kirk's hand and shook it heartily. He then turned quickly to Stanley:

"You ought to know this gentleman, Mr. Kirk, you met him before I did."

Kirk stepped towards Stanley. Both men were deeply moved.

"You were with my mother when she died, Mr. Kirk," said Stanley in a voice that trembled a little.

"If we were Russians we should embrace each other now," cried Malcom Kirk, "but as you are an Englishman, and I am an American, I suppose a hand-shake is the nearest we can get to it."

As he said it, he grasped Stanley's big palm which went out to meet his, and Raleigh said afterwards he was sure he heard the bones snap, but neither man winced.

"The heart goes with it," said Malcom Stanley, admiring Kirk out of his honest face with a loving look.

Kirk drew back a little and gazed at the stalwart young figure. Then he glanced at the painting.

"I would not like to take the contract of holding you in my arms now, as I did then. But as I remember, you were a very good baby."

"So he is now," said Raleigh, who had turned his face towards the easel to hide his emotion.

That made Faith laugh, and the rest joined her, and the tension of feeling broke, and they all grew more at ease. For several minutes questions and answers flew fast in the now darkening studio.

"Father, you must give an account of yourself. The rest of us know how we came to be here. But your presence is a mystery!" said Faith, drawing up closer to him.

"Well, my dear, it was your letter that brought me."

"My letter?"

"Yes, the one you wrote on Sunday. Your mother was very anxious about you. You did not mean to tell us, but we read between the lines that you were having 'experiences,' as you call them. Besides, a cheque came from the *Companion* that morning, and I felt the need of a little vacation and came on to Chicago to study the 'hired girl problem' and other sociological experiments."

Faith laughed. Then she passed her hand over her father's sleeve.

"I do believe you have gone and bought a new overcoat! You aren't going to be sick, are you, father? Are you feeling all right in your mind?"

"Your mother made me promise that I would get one as soon as I reached the city," said Malcom, a little sheepishly. "It only cost eight dollars and a half. That was one reason I was late getting round to the Fultons'. The train was delayed by an accident, too."

"Eight dollars and a half," muttered Faith with some indignation. But the thought of the father and his love for her that had brought him to the city softened her indignation. She clung to him closer, and the other men looked at father and daughter with great interest.

"But how did you happen to know I was here?" asked Faith, suddenly.

"I didn't, but when I called at the Fultons' Mr. Stanley had just gone. Mrs. Fulton told me who he

was, and confessed that she had no idea that you were in any way connected with the story of Stanley's life. She said he told her he expected to be at the studio this afternoon. No one knew where you had gone, and so I came down here to find him, intending to go back to the Fultons' by the time you returned."

"It's all simple enough, isn't it?" said Malcom Stanley, thoughtfully.

"Yes," said Faith. Then she suddenly remembered that she was a 'hired girl,' having a Thursday afternoon out.

"Father, I must be getting back to the Fultons'. They cannot live without me. Put that down in your sociological notes on the 'hired girl problem'—that no matter how low in the scale the 'hired girl' may be, she is really of first importance for the comfort and happiness of thousands of the best families in the land."

"That's true. Why isn't there some way, then, to elevate and dignify the service?" asked Malcom Kirk, who seemed ready to discuss the problem seriously.

"No, no, father! We can't stop to reform the world right here. It is too late. Do you want your daughter to be scolded for not getting dinner in time?"

"I am going back with you," said her father, rising.

Then he turned towards Stanley, who was looking a little anxiously at father and daughter.

"Come, Stanley, I'll take the liberty of asking you to come with us. Mrs. Fulton said you might return this evening, any way. We haven't had our talk out,

and I will be responsible for the consequences of taking you out with us."

"I was planning to go," said Stanley, looking relieved. "I want to see Mr. Fulton again on business." He did not say that he wanted to see Faith.

"Come to think of it," said Raleigh, suddenly, "I have an invitation myself to take dinner with the Fultons to-night. Mrs. Raleigh is out of town, and Fulton asked me to come out and talk over a new art design he has received for the cover of his *Mining Journal*."

"But," cried Faith, in some dismay, "do you three big men realise that I am the 'hired girl' at the Fultons'? Do you think I can possibly get a dinner ready at this time of the day for such appetites as I am sure you all have?"

There was a look of embarrassment on the faces of Raleigh and Stanley, but Malcolm Kirk settled the matter by saying, as he took Faith's arm and led her out of the studio :

"Don't be alarmed, gentlemen! I will speak for the dinner. Faith can make a palatable dinner out of bread and water in some mysterious way, and if everything else is wanting, we can feast on the remarkable events of this afternoon."

So they went out, laughing and talking, and as they took a carriage for Ellis Avenue, the driver engaging to get them there before five o'clock, there was no more happy, light-hearted girl in the great city than Faith Kirk.

CHAPTER XIX.

FAITH FINDS A MORE CONGENIAL POSITION.



HAT was the most remarkable company dinner that Mrs. Fulton ever knew in her house. Faith insisted on going to work as if nothing unusual had happened. By seven o'clock everything was ready, and the company sat down. Malcom Stanley rubbed his eyes several times as Faith came in and removed the several courses and served with a quiet dignity that made its impression on every one. Mrs. Fulton was visibly embarrassed by the fact that the girl who was in her kitchen, her "help," was the daughter of Malcom Kirk, who was the author of such stories in the *Companion*. Roy had discovered his authorship at once, by asking him a leading question, and Malcom had not been able to conceal his identity. There was an unusual respect in the young gentleman's attitude towards the Kansas preacher, a respect which, however, did not prevent him from eating the larger part of a dish of preserves, unobserved, during the general excitement

of conversation. Malcom Kirk looked proudly at Faith every time she came into the room, and the fact that she was there serving in household work did not disturb him or give him any false feeling of shame. Even Mrs. Fulton had a vague dawning of the fact of nobility in service that had been an unknown thing to her, although she could not help feeling astonished whenever she looked round the table and realised who her guests were.

After dinner was over, Alice insisted on going out to help Faith. Her mother did not rebuke her, and Faith gratefully accepted her aid. When the work was all done, Mrs. Fulton came into the kitchen.

She was struggling with an unusual emotion, and it was not easy for her to say what she had prepared.

"Faith, Miss Kirk—of course—you must come into the parlour with us this evening. You ought to have told me who you were. I—I—perhaps I have not treated you just right. I did not know——"

"Don't say anything about that, ma'am," said Faith. "This experience has been worth a good deal to me. I'm afraid I've had some unchristian thoughts about you."

"You do not need to say anything about that," said Mrs. Fulton, hastily. Then she added in a tone that made Faith feel that she had been thinking a good deal of Faith's efficient service: "We shall not know how to get along without you. You have quite spoiled us for the average help."

"I'm glad if you've been pleased," replied Faith,

and that was all that was said then, but the atmosphere between her and Mrs. Fulton cleared up wonderfully.

That evening was not soon forgotten by the Fultons. The three guests had a good deal to say. All of them had seen much of the world, and each from his own point of view was a fascinating talker. Mr. and Mrs. Fulton sat silent and intensely interested. Mr. Fulton quite forgot his business interests for awhile. Alice and Faith sat near together, and listened breathlessly to one or two stories Malcom Stanley told very modestly about some genuine adventures in the mining districts of the African Transvaal. Roy, who was just beginning to devour books in much the same manner as he devoured pie, leaned his chin on his hands and his elbows on his knees, looking up at the three men who represented so much that was heroic to him.

But perhaps the one person who impressed the whole company most deeply was Malcom Kirk.

There was something so modest, yet so manly, so winsome in its genuine Christian sympathy in his whole manner, that even Mrs. Fulton was profoundly moved by it.

"I like that Mr. Kirk," she said to her husband that evening. And that meant a good deal for her.

Malcom and Stanley remained that night at the Fultons', at their urgent request, and in the morning, after breakfast, while Mr. Fulton and Stanley were talking business in the library, Faith and her father held a conference in the parlour.

"I had planned to take you back home with me, my dear," said Malcom. "But Raleigh told me last night of his niece, Miss Varney, and said there was no doubt of your being able, with his recommendation, to secure a good position there. We want to do what is best in every way. Your mother is homesick for you, too."

"Well, father, I feel as if I ought to stay in the city if I can really become a bread-winner. Let me try it awhile at the studio, and if I fail, then I'll come home and spend the rest of my days cooking for you and the boys."

"How about your work here, Faith? Are you under promise to Mrs. Fulton to stay any length of time?"

"No, father. But I think it would be no more than fair for me to stay three or four weeks until Mrs. Fulton has time to work in some one else."

"I think so too," replied Malcom, who in all his relations to others was always guided by the strictest sense of fairness and honour. "Do what is right in the matter. Better talk frankly with Mrs. Fulton about your plans, and let her feel that you are willing to stay as long as it is right."

When Mrs. Fulton came in, Malcom and Faith had a talk with her. The result of it was that Faith promised to remain with Mrs. Fulton another month. Meanwhile she was to see Miss Varney, and if arrangements could be made, she was to enter the studio at the end of the time of her service at the

Fultons'. Mrs. Fulton was considerably surprised and greatly pleased with the arrangement. It was a good deal more than she had supposed Malcom Kirk or his daughter would agree to do, but she did not know either of them as well as she did afterwards.

Malcom Kirk spent a Sunday in Chicago, and Faith had the great delight of hearing him preach in the church to the evening service of which she had gone that eventful Sunday before. They took tea with the pastor that evening, and the next day Malcom started back to Conrad.

Malcom Stanley went with him. There was, if the truth must be told, a secret disappointment in the heart of the young Englishman that Faith was not going home, too. But the two men said good-bye cheerily to Faith, and were whirled out into the west, while Faith went back to her work with a brave heart, in spite of a little feeling of home-sickness that crept over her at the sight of the two stalwart figures on the platform of the receding train.

Her relations with the Fultons' were decidedly different now. She was careful not to presume in the least on the change in their thought of her, and when Mrs. Fulton asked her that day if she would not sit down at the table with them, she said she preferred not to, which was entirely true, for Faith believed that if she was to serve the family as she ought at meal times she must be ready to do so in the most effective manner. And she knew she could not do so if she ate with the rest.

Mrs. Fulton was much relieved at Faith's action in that particular. It seemed to Faith, however, that when Sunday morning came, and Alice asked her to come into the family circle to prayers, that she ought to go, and she did so quietly, and enjoyed it.

When evening came, Alice wanted to go to church with her, and Mrs. Fulton did not say anything. The new order of things was unheard of, but a girl whose family friends included men like Francis Raleigh and Malcom Stanley was not an ordinary hired girl, and Mrs. Fulton reasoned with herself accordingly.

But before that Sunday came, Faith and the artist had gone to see the famous lady photographer who had taken a liking to Faith at the beginning. She readily agreed to take Faith on trial at the end of the month, and Faith went back to her kitchen quite exultant at the prospect.

"If I could only send ten or even five dollars a week home, I'd be the proudest girl in this city," she said, as she prepared the dinner that evening. "And then, in time, perhaps I can have a studio of my own like Miss Varney's. I know I have plenty of artistic ideas, and maybe one or two of them are original."

So she sang, light-hearted as she worked, overcoming the world of her selfishness and her trials, for it was not all heaven on earth always even in that well-appointed kitchen and there were many things to fight without and within.

But when the time of her stay with the Fultons was out, she parted from them with genuine regret. It is very certain that Mrs. Fulton dreaded exceedingly to "break in" the new girl, and at the last she even urged Faith to remain another month.

"We will give you five dollars a week if you will only stay," she said, anxiously. "And you can play the piano if you want to," she added with a short laugh and a little embarrassment.

"I'm sorry, really sorry, to leave you, Mrs. Fulton. You have been very good to me. But I feel as if the Lord meant me to do something else. Perhaps" (Faith said it a little vaguely, but she had brooded over it a great deal while at work in the kitchen) "perhaps I may be able to do something to make American girls willing to go out to service."

"I wish you could. Really, you have no idea what I have suffered from my helps in the last twenty years," sighed Mrs. Fulton.

Roy was inconsolable. "Tell you what I'll do," he said, a week before Faith's time was up. "If you will bake a pie every day and send it over from the studio, I'll give you my kodak."

Faith laughed, but declined the offer.

"Then, I'll give you the kodak anyway," said Roy, and he insisted on Faith taking it, and his offer was so pressing, that she had not the strength to refuse. At the earliest opportunity she sent him a photograph of a street urchin eating a pie, holding it in both hands, and Roy delightedly framed it and hung it up

in his own room after his mother had refused to let it adorn the top of the sideboard in the dining-room.

But Faith experienced the sincerest regret in parting from Alice. The two girls entered into what proved to be a really genuine friendship. There was not a particle of pride or jealousy in Alice's nature, and not the least feeling of social caste. She wanted Faith to show her how a certain finger exercise on the piano was best done, and more than once expressed the greatest admiration for Faith's accomplishments. When the girls parted, they kissed each other, and Alice afterwards cried heartily. The friendship thus begun has lasted to the present moment. Then there began a new life for Faith. She seemed at last to have found her place in the world. Miss Varney was more than delighted with her.

"That girl," she said to Francis Raleigh, who called at her studio a month after Faith had been there, "has brought more new ideas into my work than all my other assistants. She will make her mark in the profession."

Faith was in the next room, and could not help hearing what was said, unknown to the artist. She trembled with pleasure, and when she wrote home that night, she gave her mother a glowing account of her work and its hope for future success. It was with the keenest pleasure that she was able to enclose in this same letter ten dollars, which she had saved from her earnings in the studio.

CHAPTER XX.

THE TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY AT CONRAD.



O the winter quickly passed, and spring melted into summer, and then a growing plan developed in Faith's mind. She had not been able to crowd it out of her "heart-thoughts," as she called any ideas that kept making her think of other people. Even her rapidly developing artistic power could not prevent the silent, increasing, powerful pressure of an idea that she had also a mission to perform for the good of people in a certain peculiar way.

"I shall have to go home and talk it over with father before I can settle it," she kept saying to herself all the summer, and when autumn was ushered in, and she could see the frosty mornings on the prairie, and call up in memory the sound of the prairie chickens out in the cornfields, and see the great stretch of sky that was never possible in the smoky city with its ugly piles of buildings that shut out sun and air, then Faith grew really lonesome and homesick, and one day she resolutely told Miss Varney that she must go home for a little visit.

"I don't blame you, my dear. Go home and breathe some fresh prairie air and photograph some Kansas ideas, and come back with them, and we will make our fortune."

"I don't know about getting photographs of Kansas ideas," replied Faith. "But I do know about the prairie air. And I'm going to get some."

So Faith ran out to the Fultons', said good-bye to them and Francis Raleigh at the same time, and started for home that day.

She had written home telling of her coming, and when she reached Conrad, there were father and mother and the boys at the station, and a little back of that eager group a stalwart manly figure, Malcom Stanley, who had come in quite suddenly the day before from New Mexico. It is not exactly certain how he knew that Faith was coming home, or, indeed, if he knew anything about it, but it is very certain that he was there, at that time, and that Malcom and Dorothy had given him a hearty welcome.

"You're just in time to help our church celebrate our twenty-fifth anniversary," Malcom had said to him. His church was planning, in a quiet way, for such an anniversary, and it pleased him much to think that Faith was to be at home in time, and also that Stanley could be with them.

That was a wonderful home-coming for Faith. The experiences she had had were rehearsed in the

family circle, and there never had been so much hearty, pure laughter in the parsonage since it was built. In the frosty evenings they sat around the one open fire in the parlour, and even Malcom shut up his study and joined the group early, talking over matters with Faith, and entering into all her new plans with the enthusiasm of a boy. Dorothy smiled often through happy tears, as she looked at her children and saw them growing up into sturdy, useful lives, and in her heart she thanked the Great Father continually for such treasures, worth more to her and her husband than all the gold and silver in the world.

"I want the boys to go to Phillips Academy next year," Faith said, with an air of one possessed of untold riches. "That's where father graduated, and it will be a fine thing for them to follow him there."

"Splendid!" exclaimed Malcom. "I've always dreamed it would be so."

"'Art is long,'" continued Faith, "but I'm sure I can win some of the prizes for best photographic ideas offered by the eastern papers. If the boys had a hundred dollars apiece, they could enter the school and earn their own way for the most part, couldn't they, father?"

"Of course they could," replied Malcom, and he told of some of his own experiences as a boy in academy and college life.

"It seems to me, Mr. Kirk, that you have done a little of everything in your lifetime," said Malcom

Stanley, who sat in the family circle and, somehow, seemed quite like one of them.

"Everything except looking out for himself," said Faith, quietly.

"The Lord has blessed us very much," said Malcom, looking at Faith tenderly. "I'm afraid your poor old father has had to fight a good many hard battles against selfishness that he hasn't told you about. Your mother might tell you how bad I am, if she wanted to."

"I don't feel like doing it now," replied Dorothy, as her eyes rested on Malcom's plain, loving face, and her love for him was stronger than ever.

"But about my plan, father," said Faith, after they had all been silent before the fire. "What do you think of it? Can I do anything that way?"

"It is worth trying," said Malcom, very thoughtfully. "It will take a good deal of wisdom. Do you think you can do it and carry on your art studies, too?"

"I don't know." Faith spoke softly. "But now just think of it. Here is the fact. Thousands of families all over the world are dependent for their physical and mental and moral comfort upon the kind of service they have in their kitchens and homes. Now, if this is the case, why isn't it possible to dignify and elevate such service to a point where a girl who goes out to work may feel that she is doing a really noble thing in helping to keep a whole family in the comfort of body and peace of mind that will

make the family more happy and more useful in the world? That is 'the hired girl' problem in one sentence. My plan is to start with Christian families and with Christian girls, and get each side to realise what household service can be made to do. I believe a circle of such people can be formed in such a way that gradually the homes and the girls will be organised into a mutual helpfulness, and it will be more honourable and better financially and morally for a girl to go out to service than to go into a store or an office, even. At least for a time. For it really takes more brains to be an efficient cook and house-keeper than to stand behind a counter and sell goods."

Faith paused, as if she suddenly felt that Malcom Stanley was looking at her with the greatest interest, as, indeed, he was. And if he really began to love Faith right then and there more truly than he yet had done, it was owing to the sudden glimpse he had caught of a young soul on fire to be and do for the good of others.

But Faith's plan led to a discussion that was long, and continued through so many days, that we cannot follow it in detail here. It is enough to say that when Faith went back to Chicago, she carried with her a definite plan which she was able sooner than she expected to put into working practice.

Conrad will never forget the anniversary week held in honour of Malcom Kirk and his church. It was a week of surprises to him and Dorothy. The

town woke up in sudden, hearty western fashion, and before he knew it, Malcom was the recipient of a whole town's honour.

On Sunday, the church had appropriate services to celebrate their twenty-five years' existence. There was a great sermon in the morning by Malcom, and papers by old settlers and charter members in the afternoon. In the evening, the young people crowded the church with their meeting, and when they adjourned, they went out in front of the parsonage and sang a hymn that one of their own members had composed, in praise of the church.

The only sad feature of the day to Malcom was the presence of Mrs. Barton at the morning service. It was a sadness relieved by one great burst of joy.

"Oh, Mr. Kirk," said the old woman, bowed now with years and sorrow. "If Phil had only been saved! Thank God I owe my other son to you." She went on to speak of Malcom's efforts which had made the saloon an outlaw in Conrad those many years, and pointed with pride to her remaining son, who was a member of the church and one of Malcom's great friends. "He'd have gone the way of Phil and his father if the saloon was here," she said, and wrung Malcom's hand and went out, but Malcom knew her heart was still hungry for her first-born.

Next day the citizens held a meeting in the courthouse, at which the mayor presided. Malcom was present as the guest of honour. He had tried to

prevent any such expression towards himself. But when he found himself powerless, he seized the occasion to glorify the cause of God's kingdom. His speech was a splendid tribute to the power of righteousness. Throughout it all, his modesty and unselfishness had never been more forcibly or beautifully illustrated to his townspeople. The citizens of Conrad remembered that address long years after countless political speeches had faded out of their memories.

It was, perhaps, significant of the peculiar esteem in which Malcom Kirk and Dorothy were held in Conrad that no attempt was made that week to present them with a gold watch or a tea set, or any physical token. The church at a business session voted to increase Malcom's salary, and there were very many flowers sent to the parsonage, but the people seemed to know that what would be most acceptable to Malcom Kirk and his wife on that anniversary would be the love of the parish, and they did feel that, and never, in all their lives, had it meant so much to them.

One incident of that anniversary week illustrated Malcom's character better than any other.

The picture that Stanley had brought to Kirk had been placed in the parsonage, but it was almost ridiculously large for the small rooms.

Dorothy and Malcom both felt that it was out of place, but the gift meant so much that they were in doubt what was best to do with it.

The day after Malcom's address in the court-house, one of the managers of the Orphan's Home that Malcom had been largely instrumental in organising, was calling on Dorothy.

She saw the picture and instantly said :

"If we only had that in the hall of the Home!"

"Just the place for it, too," said Malcom, when Dorothy told him of it.

Without delay, and with Stanley's hearty assistance, the picture was taken to the Home and hung up in a conspicuous place in a large hall. It had a remarkable effect on visitors. One ranchman, who was never known to give anything to any cause, visited the place shortly afterwards, and the sight of the picture moved him to give twenty-five dollars to the Home.

"The sight of that baby in Mr. Kirk's arms just hypnotised the money out of my pocket," he said afterwards.

"That is the sort of hypnotism we believe in," said the Matron of the Home, and Conrad echoed the sentiment.

When the eventful week was gone, Faith made her preparations to return. Malcom Stanley also announced his return to the New Mexico mines. The night before he departed, he went into Malcom's study, and with some embarrassment told him what Malcom had seen already. For he and Dorothy had not been able to conceal from each other the fact that the young Englishman had grown to have a great liking for Faith's company.

"It seems like a short time, Mr. Kirk, but I love Faith, and I want your consent to be her suitor."

"I should think her consent would be worth more to you," said Malcom Kirk, with a flash of his old wit, which had not the slightest approach to levity. But he had grown to love Malcom Stanley, and felt sure, from indications, that Faith was not far from the same feeling.

"Then I may write to her?" said Malcom Stanley. "I don't want to call her away from her plans or her profession. Indeed, if I win her heart, we will accomplish more together than separately."

"I believe it," said Malcom, gravely. And he added with a smile, "My dear fellow, I hope you realise what it means to have a 'hired girl problem' to take care of."

"I will gladly assume that," said Stanley, and he went back to his solitary work in New Mexico with great enthusiasm. It seems entirely possible that he even found courage to say something to Faith before he went, for Faith and Dorothy had a confidential talk that evening, and Dorothy had tears on her face when it was ended, and Faith's face glows when a certain letter with a queer post-mark comes into the studio at Kenwood, where she is making her mark as an artist and brooding over her plans for the good of the world, into which plans she now includes a tall manly figure out west.

When Stanley and Faith had gone, at the close of that week, Malcom went over to the church one even-

ing to get his Bible, which he had left on the pulpit. The new church was lighted with electricity, and Malcom turned on the light near the desk, and after finding the Bible, he stood there on the platform a moment.

While he was there, Dorothy came in to get a pot of flowers which had been taken into the church during the anniversary exercises.

She came up to the platform and stood there with her husband.

They were both reminded of that first night when they had gone into the little church and had made their promise.

"It is not like the old room, Malcom, is it?"

Dorothy said it with a feeling as if a Presence was in the church that was not human or earthly.

"No, my dear. God has been very good to us all these years."

Dorothy crept up nearer to him and Malcom put his arm around her, and they looked out into the dimly-lighted church together. The battle in Conrad was still going on. There was still the drink power to meet in one form and another. There were still ugly forms of evil, selfishness in many shapes to face, but God had gloriously used these two disciples for the building of His kingdom on the earth. Their children, also, were going out to fight the same good fight of the faith, to battle for the right, to relieve distress and overcome the world. It seemed almost certain that as they stood there, an Angel of

Light noted their lives and breathed over the town a benediction of peace, and Malcom and Dorothy passed out of the church and into their home with God's blessing on their hearts. It was not by any chance that Malcom chose for his text as he took his Bible and went up into his study that night the words in the book of the Revelation,—

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."

THE END.

ROBERT HARDY'S SEVEN DAYS

A Dream and its Consequences

BY

CHARLES M. SHELDON

AUTHOR OF

"IN HIS STEPS" "THE CRUCIFIXION OF PHILLIP STRONG"

"HIS BROTHER'S KEEPER" ETC.

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PREFACE.

This story was first read by the author to his Sunday evening congregation in the spring of 1892. The chapters were given one at a time on consecutive Sundays, and the way in which the story was received encouraged the pastor in his attempt to solve the problem of the Sunday evening service in this manner.

CHARLES M. SHELDON.

Central Church, TOPEKA, Kansas.

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ROBERT HARDY'S SEVEN DAYS.

THE DREAM.

IT was Sunday night, and Robert Hardy had just come home from the evening service in the church at Barton. He was not in the habit of attending the evening service, but something said by his minister in the morning had impelled him to go. The evening had been a little unpleasant and a light snow was falling, and his wife had excused herself from going to church on that account. Mr. Hardy came home cross and fault-finding.

"Catch me going to evening service again! Only fifty people there, and it was a sheer waste of fuel and light. The sermon was one of the dullest I ever heard. I believe Mr. Jones is growing too old for our church. We need a young man, more up with the times. He is everlastingly harping on the necessity of doing what we can in the present to save souls. To hear him talk you would think every man who wasn't running about to save souls every

winter was a robber and an enemy of society. He is getting off, too, on this new-fangled Christian Sociology, and thinks the rich men are oppressing the poor, and that church members ought to study and follow more closely the teachings of Christ and be more brotherly and neighbourly to their fellow-men. Bah! I am sick of the whole subject of humanity. I shall withdraw my pledge to the salary if the present style of preaching continues."

"What was the text of the sermon to-night?" asked Mrs. Hardy.

"Oh, I don't remember exactly! Something about 'this night thy soul shall be demanded,' or words like that. I don't believe in this attempt to scare folks into heaven."

"It would take a good many sermons to scare you, Robert."

"Yes; more than two a-week," replied Mr. Hardy with a dry laugh. He drew off his overcoat and threw himself down on the lounge in front of the open fire. "Where are the girls?"

"Alice is upstairs reading the morning paper; Clara and Bess went over to call on the Caxtons."

"How did they happen to go over there?"

Mrs. Hardy hesitated. Finally she said, "James came over and invited them."

"And they know I have forbidden them to have anything to do with the Caxtons! When they come in I will let them know I mean what I say. It is very strange the girls do not appear to understand that."

Mr. Hardy rose from the lounge and walked across the room, then came back and lay down again, and from his recumbent position poked the fire savagely with the shovel.

Mrs. Hardy bit her lips and seemed on the point of replying, but said nothing.

At last Mr. Hardy asked: "Where are the boys?"

"Will is getting on with his lessons for to-morrow up in his room. George went out about eight o'clock. He didn't say where he was going."

"It's a nice family. Is there one night in the year, Mary, when all our children are at home?"

"Almost as many as there are when you are at home!" retorted Mrs. Hardy. "What with your club and your lodge and your scientific society and your reading circle and your directors' meeting, the children see about as much of you as you do of them. How many nights in a week do you give to us, Robert? Do you think it is strange that the children go outside for their amusements? Our home"—Mrs. Hardy paused and looked around at the costly interior of the room where the two were—"our home is well furnished with everything but our own children!"

The man on the lounge was silent. He felt the sharpness of the thrust made by his wife and knew it was too true to be denied. But Mr. Hardy was, above all things else, selfish. He had not the remotest intention of giving up his club or his scientific society or his frequent cosy dinners with

business men because his wife spent so many lonely deserted evenings at home and because his children were almost strangers to him. But it annoyed him, as a respectable citizen, to have his children making acquaintances of whom he did not approve, and it grated on his old-fashioned, inherited New England ideas that his boys and girls should be away from home so often in the evening, and especially on Sunday evening. The maxim of Robert Hardy's life was "Self-interest first." As long as he was not thwarted in his own pleasures he was as good-natured as the average man. He provided liberally for the household expenses, and his wife and children were supplied with money and the means to travel as they requested it. But the minute he was crossed in his own plans, or any one demanded of him a service that compelled some self-denial, he became hard, ill-natured, and haughty.

He had been a member of the church at Barton for twenty-five years, one of the trustees, and a liberal giver. He prided himself on that fact. But so far as giving any of his time or personal service was concerned, he would as soon have thought of giving all his property away to the first poor man he met. His minister had this last week written him an earnest, warm-hearted letter, expressing much pleasure at the service he had rendered so many years as a trustee, and asking him if he would not come to the Wednesday evening meeting that week and take some part, whatever he chose, to help them. It was a season

of anxious interest among many in the church, and the pastor earnestly desired the presence and help of all the members.

Robert had read the letter through hastily and smiled a little scornfully. What! *he* take part in a prayer meeting! He couldn't remember when he had attended one—they were too dull for him. He wondered at Mr. Jones for writing such a letter, and almost felt as though he had been impertinent. He threw the letter into the waste basket, and did not even answer it. He would not have been guilty of such a lack of courtesy in regard to a business letter, but a letter from his minister was another thing. The idea of replying to a letter from him never occurred to Mr. Hardy. And when Thursday night came he went down to a meeting of the chess club and had a good time with his favourite game: for he was a fine player and was engaged in a series of games which were being played for the state championship.

The superintendent of the Sunday-school had lately timidly approached Mr. Hardy and asked him if he would not take a class of boys in the Sunday-school. What! *he* take a class of boys! He, the influential, wealthy manager of one of the largest railroad shops in the world—*he* give his time to the teaching of a Sunday-school class! He excused himself on the score of lack of time, and the very same evening of his interview with the superintendent he went to the theatre to hear a popular farce, and

after he reached home spent an hour in his favourite study of chemistry in his laboratory at the top of his house: for Mr. Hardy was a man of considerable power as a student, and he had an admirable physical constitution, capable of the most terrible strain. Anything that gave him pleasure he was willing to work for. He was not lazy; but the idea of giving his personal time and service and talents to bless the world had no place in his mind.

And so, as he lay on the lounge that evening and listened to his wife's plain statement concerning his selfishness, he had no intention of giving up a single thing that gratified his tastes and fed his pride.

After a silence of sufficient length for some one to make the explanation just given, Mrs. Hardy said, speaking coldly, as if it were a matter of indifference to her:

"Mr. Burns, the foreman, called while you were out."

"He did? What did he want?"

"He said four of the men in the casting room were severely injured this afternoon by the bursting of one of the retorts, and the entire force had quitted work and gone home."

"Couldn't Burns supply the place of the injured men. He knows where the extras are."

"That was what he came to see you about. He said he needed further directions. The men flatly refused to work another minute and went out in a body. I don't blame them much. Robert, don't you

believe God will punish you for keeping the shops open on Sunday?"

"Nonsense, Mary!" replied Mr. Hardy; yet there was a shadow of uneasiness in his tone. "The work has got to go on. It is a work of necessity. Railroads are public servants; they can't rest on Sundays."

"Then when God tells the world that it must not work on Sundays, He does not mean railroad men? The Fourth Commandment ought to read, 'Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy, except all ye men who work for railroads. Ye haven't any Sunday.'"

"Mary, I didn't come from one sermon to listen to another. You're worse than Mr. Jones."

Mr. Hardy half rose on the lounge and leaned on his elbow, looking at his wife with every mark of displeasure on his face. Yet as he looked, somehow there stole into his thought the memory of the old New England home in the Vermont hills, and the vision of that quiet little country village where Mary and he had been brought up together. He seemed to see the old meeting-house on the hill, at the end of a long elm-shaded street that straggled through the village, and he saw himself again as he began to fall in love with Mary, the beauty of the village; and he had a vision of one Sunday when, walking back from church by Mary's side, he had asked her to be his wife. It seemed to him that a breath of the meadow just beyond Squire Hazen's place came into the room, just as it was wafted up to him when Mary

turned and said the happy word that made that day the gladdest, proudest day he had ever known.

What! memories of the old times! He seemed to come to himself, and stared round into the fire as if wondering where he was, and he did not see the tear that rolled down his wife's cheek and fell upon her two hands clasped in her lap. She arose and went over to the piano, which stood in the shadow, and sitting down, with her back to her husband, she played fragments of music nervously. Mr. Hardy lay down on the lounge again. After a while Mrs. Hardy wheeled round on the piano stool and said:

"Robert, don't you think you had better go over and see Mr. Burns about the men who were hurt?"

"Why, what can I do about it? The company's doctor will see to them. I should only be in the way. Did Burns say they were badly hurt?"

"One of them had his eyes put out, and another will have to lose both feet. I think he said his name was Scoville."

"What, not Ward Scoville?"

"I think Burns said that was the name."

Mr. Hardy rose from the lounge, then lay down again. "Oh, well, I can go there the first thing in the morning. I can't do anything now," he muttered.

But there came to his memory a picture of one day when he was walking through the machine shops. A heavy piece of casting had broken from the end of a large hoisting derrick and would have fallen upon him and probably killed him if this man,

Scoville, at the time a workman in the machine department, had not pulled him on one side, at the risk of his own life. As it was, in saving the life of the manager, Scoville was struck on the shoulder, and rendered useless for work for four weeks. Mr. Hardy had raised his wages and advanced him to a responsible position in the casting room. Mr. Hardy was not a man without generosity and humane feeling; but as he lay on the lounge that evening and thought of the cold snow outside and the distance to the shop tenements, he readily excused himself from going out to see the man who had once saved him, and who now lay maimed for life. If any one thinks it impossible that one man calling himself a Christian could be thus indifferent to another, then he does not know the power that selfishness can exercise over the actions of men. Mr. Hardy had one supreme law which he obeyed, and that law was self.

Again Mrs. Hardy, who rarely ventured to oppose her husband's wishes, turned to the piano and struck a few chords aimlessly. Then she wheeled round again and said abruptly:

"Robert, the cook gave warning to-night that she must go home at once."

Mr. Hardy had begun to doze a little, but at this sudden statement he sat up and exclaimed:

"Well, you *are* the bearer of bad news to-night, Mary! What's the matter with everybody? I suppose the cook wants more pay."

Mrs. Hardy replied quietly : " Her sister is dying. And do you know, I believe I have never given the girl credit for much feeling. She always seemed to me to lack there, though she is certainly the most faithful and efficient servant we ever had in the house. She came in just after Mr. Burns left, and broke down, crying bitterly. It seems her sister is married to one of the railroad men here in town, and has been ailing with consumption for some months. She is very poor, and a large family has kept her struggling for mere existence. The cook was almost beside herself with grief as she told the story, and said she must leave us and care for her sister, who could not live more than a week at the longest. I pitied the poor girl. Robert, don't you think we could do something for the family? We have so much ourselves. We could easily help them and not miss a single luxury."

" And where would such help end? If we give to every needy person who comes along, we shall be beggars ourselves. Besides, I can't afford it. The boys are a heavy expense to me while they are in college, and the company has been cutting down salaries lately. If the cook's sister is married to a railroad man, he is probably getting good wages and can support her all right."

" What if that railroad man were injured and made a cripple for life?" inquired Mrs. Hardy quietly.

" Then the insurance companies or the societies

can help them out. I don't see how we can make every case that comes along our care. There would be no end of it if we once began."

"As nearly as I can find out," continued Mrs. Hardy, without replying to her husband's remarks, "our cook's sister is married to one of the men who was hurt this afternoon. She talks so brokenly in our language that I could not make out exactly how it is; and she was much excited. Suppose it was Scoville; couldn't you do something for them then, Robert."

"I might," replied Mr. Hardy briefly. "But I can tell you, I have more calls for my money now than I can meet. Take the church expenses, for example. Why, we are called upon to give to some cause or other every week, besides our regular pledges for current expenses. It's a constant drain. I shall have to cut down on my pledge. We can't be giving to everything always, and have anything ourselves."

Mr. Hardy spoke with a touch of indignation. His wife glanced round the almost palatial room and smiled; then her face grew a little stern and almost forbidding as she remembered that only last week her husband had spent a substantial amount for a new electrical apparatus to experiment with in his laboratory. And now he was talking of hard times, and grudging the small sums he gave to religious objects in connection with his church, and thinking he could not afford to help the family of a man who had once saved his life!

Again she turned to the piano and played a while, but she could not be rested by the music as sometimes she had been. When she finally arose and walked over by the table near the end of the lounge, Mr. Hardy was asleep, and she sat down by the table gazing into the open fire drearily, a look of sorrow and unrest on her face, which was still beautiful, but worn by years of disappointment and the loss of that respect and admiration she once held for the man who had vowed at the altar to make her happy. She had not wholly lost her love for him, but she was fast losing the best part of it, the love which has its daily source in an inborn respect. When respect is gone, love is not long in following after.

She sat thus for half an hour, and was at last aroused by the two girls, Clara and Bess, coming in. They were laughing and talking together and had evidently parted with some one at the door. Mrs. Hardy went out into the hall.

"Hush, girls, your father is asleep! You know how he feels when awakened suddenly by noise. But he has been waiting up for you."

"Then I guess we'll go upstairs without bidding him good-night," said Clara abruptly. "I don't want to be lectured about going over to the Caxtons'."

"No; I want to see you both and have a little talk with you. Come in here." Mrs. Hardy drew the two girls into the front room and pulled the curtains together over the arch opening into the room where Mr. Hardy lay. "Now tell me, girls,

why did your father forbid your going over to the Caxtons'? I did not know of it until to-night. Has it something to do with James?"

Neither of the girls said anything for a minute. Then Bess, who was the younger of the two and famous for startling the family with very sensational remarks, replied, "James and Clara are engaged; and they are going to be married to-morrow."

Mrs. Hardy looked at Clara, who grew very red in the face, and then, to the surprise of her mother and Bess, the girl burst into a violent fit of crying. Mrs. Hardy gathered her into her arms as in the olden times when she was a little child and soothed her into quietness.

"Tell me all about it, dear. I did not know you cared for James in that way."

"But I do," sobbed Clara. "And father guessed something and forbade us going there any more. But I didn't think he would mind it if Bess and I went just this one night. I couldn't help it, anyway. Mother, isn't it right for people to love each other?"

"'Tisn't proper to talk about such things on Sunday," said Bess solemnly.

"Clara," said Mrs. Hardy, "why, you're only a child yet! Is it true that James is—why, he is only a boy!"

"He is twenty-one and I am eighteen, and he's earning forty dollars a month in the office and is one of the best stenographers in the state. We've talked it over, and I wish we could be married to-morrow!"

Clara burst out with it all at once, while Bess remarked quietly :

"Yes, they're very sensible, and I think James is nice, but when I marry I want more than forty dollars a month for candy alone. And then he isn't particularly handsome."

"He is!" cried Clara. "And he's good and brave and splendid, and I'd rather have him than a thousand such men as Lancey Cummings! Mother, I don't want money. It hasn't made you happy!"

"Hush, dear!" Mrs. Hardy felt as though a blow had smitten her in the face. She was silent then.

Clara put her arms round her mother and whispered: "Forgive me, mother! I didn't mean to hurt you. But I am so unhappy."

Unhappy! And yet the girl was just beginning to blossom out towards the face of God under the influence of that most divine and tender and true feeling that ever comes to a girl who knows that a true, brave man loves her with all his soul. And some people would have us leave this subject to the flippanant novelist instead of treating it as Christ did when He said, "For this cause [that is, for love] shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife."

Mrs. Hardy was on the point of saying something when the sound of peculiar steps on the stairs was heard, and shortly after Alice pushed the curtains aside and came in. Alice was the eldest girl of the family. She was a cripple, the result of an accident

when a child, and she carried a crutch, using it with much skill and even grace. The minute she entered the room she saw that something was happening, but she simply said :

“Mother, isn’t it a little strange that father sleeps so soundly? I went up to him and spoke to him just now, thinking he was just lying there, and he didn’t answer, and then I saw he was asleep. But I never knew him to sleep so on Sunday night. He usually reads up in the study.”

“Perhaps he is ill ; I will go and see.”

Mrs. Hardy rose and went into the other room ; and just then the younger boy, Will, came downstairs. He said something to his mother as he passed through the room, carrying one of his books in his hand, and then came in where the girls were.

“I say, Alice, translate this passage for me, will you? Confound the old Romans! What do I care about the way they fought their old battles and built their old one-horse bridges! What makes me angry is the way Cæsar has of telling a thing. Why can’t he drive right straight ahead instead of beating about the bush so? If I couldn’t get up a better language than those old duffers used to write their books in, I’d lie down and die. I can’t find the old verb to that sentence anywhere. Maybe it’s somewhere on the other page, or maybe Cæsar left it out just on purpose to plague us boys.”

And Will threw the book over to Alice, who good-naturedly began to read, while that much-suffering

youth sat down by Bess and began to tease her and Clara.

"What are you and Clara doing at this time of day? Time you youngsters were going upstairs. Play us a little tune, Bessie, will you? What have you been crying for, Clara Vere de Vere?"

"I should think you ought to be ashamed of yourself, Will, studying on Sunday nights!" said little Bess reprovingly and with dignity.

"No worse than flirting on Sunday nights," retorted the incorrigible Will.

"I haven't been," replied Bess indignantly. "I've been with Clara——"

"She doesn't need any help, does she?" inquired Will innocently. And going over where Clara lay with her face hid in the pillow of a large couch, Will tried to pull the pillow from under her head.

"Let me alone, Will. I don't feel well," said a muffled voice from the pillow.

"Pshaw! you're fooling."

"No, I'm not. Let me alone."

"Come here, or I won't read your sentence for you," called Alice. And Will reluctantly withdrew, for he knew from experience that Alice would keep her word.

"All right. Now go ahead; not too fast. Here, wait a minute! Let me write it down. I don't intend to miss to-morrow if I can help it. And old Romulus will call me up on this very passage, I know. It would be just like him, though, to strike me on the review."

At that minute the door opened and in came George, the elder boy, and the eldest of the group of children. He hung up his hat and coat and strolled into the room.

"Where's mother?"

"She's in the other room," answered Bess. "Father's been asleep, and mother was afraid he was going to have a fever."

"That's one of your stories," said George, who seemed in a good-natured mood. He sat down and drew his little sister towards him and whispered to her:

"I say, Bess, I want some money again."

"Awfully?" whispered Bess.

"Yes; for a special reason. Do you think you could let me have a little?"

"Why, of course! you can have all my month's allowance. But why don't you ask father?"

"No; I've asked him too much lately. He refused point-blank last time. I didn't like the way he spoke."

"Well, you can have all mine," said Bess, whispering.

George and she were great friends, and there was not a thing that Bessie would not have done for her big brother, who was her hero. What he wanted with so much money she never asked.

They were still whispering together, and Clara had just risen to go upstairs, and Alice and Will had finished the translation, and Will was just on the

point of seeing how near he could come to throwing the Commentaries of Cæsar into an ornamental Japanese jar across the room, when Mrs. Hardy parted the curtains at the arch and beckoned her children to come into the next room. Her face was exceedingly pale, and she was trembling as though with some great terror.

The children all cried out in surprise and hurried into the next room. But before relating what happened there, we will follow Mr. Hardy into the experience he had, just after falling asleep upon the lounge by the open fire.

It seemed to him that he stepped at once from the room where he lay into a place such as he had never seen before, where the one great idea that filled his entire thought was that of the Present Moment. Spread out before him as though reproduced by a phonograph and a magic lantern combined was the moving panorama of the entire world. He thought he saw into every home, every public place of business, every saloon and place of amusement, every shop and every farm, every place of industry, pleasure, and vice upon the face of the globe. And he thought he could hear the world's conversation, catch its sobs of suffering, nay, even catch the meaning of unspoken thoughts of the heart. With that absurd rapidity peculiar to certain dreams, he fancied that over every city on the globe was placed a glass cover, through which he could look and through which the sounds of the city's industry came to him. But he thought that

he ascertained that by lifting off one of these covers he could hear with greater distinctness the thoughts of the inhabitants, and see all they were doing and suffering, with the most minute exactness. He looked for the place of his own town, Barton. There it lay in its geographical spot on the globe, and he thought that, moved by an impulse he could not resist, he lifted off the cover and bent down to see and hear.

The first thing he saw was his minister's home. It was just after the Sunday evening service, the one which Mr. Hardy had thought so dull. Mr. Jones was talking over the evening with his wife.

"My dear," he said, "I feel about discouraged. Of what use is all our praying and longing for the Holy Spirit, when our own church members are so cold and unspiritual that all His influence is destroyed? You know I made a special plea to all the members to come to-night, yet only a handful were there. I feel like giving up the struggle. You know I could make a better living in literary work, and the children could be better cared for then."

"But, John, it was a bad night to get out: you must remember that."

"But only fifty out of a church membership of four hundred, most of them living near by! It doesn't seem just right to me."

"Mr. Hardy was there. Did you see him?"

"Yes; after service I went and spoke to him, and he treated me very coldly. And yet he is the most wealthy, and in some ways the most gifted, church

member we have. He could do great things for the good of this community, if——”

Suddenly Mr. Hardy thought the minister changed into the Sunday-school superintendent, and he was walking down the street thinking about his classes in the school, and Mr. Hardy thought he could hear the superintendent's thoughts, as though his ear were at a phonograph.

“It's too bad! That class of boys I wanted Mr. Hardy to take left the school because no one could be found to teach them. And now Bob Wilson has got into trouble and been arrested for petty thieving. It will be a terrible blow to his poor mother. Oh, why is it that men like Mr. Hardy cannot be made to see the importance of work in the Sunday-school? With his knowledge of chemistry and geology he could have reached that class of boys and invited them to his home, up into his laboratory, and exercised an influence over them they would never outgrow. Oh, it's a strange thing to me that men of such possibilities do not realise their power!”

The superintendent passed along shaking his head sorrowfully, and Mr. Hardy, who seemed guided by some power he could not resist and compelled to listen whether he liked it or not, next found himself looking into one of the railroad-shop tenements, where the man Scoville was lying, awaiting amputation of both feet after the terrible accident. Scoville's wife lay upon a ragged lounge, while Mrs. Hardy's cook kneeled by her side and in her native Swedish tongue

tried to comfort the poor woman. So it was true that these two were sisters. The man was still conscious, and suffering unspeakably. The railroad surgeon had been sent for, but had not arrived. Three or four men and their wives had come in to do what they could. Mr. Burns, the foreman, was among them. One of the men spoke in a whisper to him :

“Have you been to see Mr. Hardy?”

“Yes; but he was at church. I left word about the accident.”

“At church! So even the devil sometimes goes to church. What for, I wonder? Will he be here, do you think?”

“Don’t know!” replied Mr. Burns curtly.

“Do you mind when he [pointing to Scoville] saved Mr. Hardy’s life?”

“Remember it well enough; was standing close by.”

“What’ll be done with the children when Scoville goes, eh?”

“Don’t know.”

Just then the surgeon came in and preparations were rapidly made for the operation. The last that Mr. Hardy heard was the shriek of the poor wife as she struggled to her feet and fell in a fit across the floor where two of the youngest children clung terrified to her dress.

The next scene was a room where everything appeared confused at first but finally grew more

distinct and terrible in its significance. The first person Mr. Hardy recognised was his own eldest boy, George, in company with a group of young men engaged in—what! He rubbed his eyes and stared painfully. Yes, they were gambling. So here was where George spent all his money, and Bessie's too! Nothing that the miserable father had seen so far cut him to the quick quite so sharply as this. He had prided himself on his own freedom from vices, and had an honest horror of them: for Mr. Hardy was not a monster of iniquity, only an intensely selfish man. Gambling, drinking, impurity—all the physical vices—were to Mr. Hardy the lowest degradation.

The thought that his own son had fallen into this pit was terrible to him. But he was compelled to look and listen. All the young men were smoking, and beer and wine, which stood on a buffet at one side of the room, were plentifully partaken of.

"I say, George," said a very flashily dressed youth who was smoking a cigarette, "your old man would rub his eyes to see you here, eh?"

"Well, I should think he would!" replied George as he shuffled the cards and then helped himself to a drink.

"I say, George," said the first speaker, "your sister Clara is getting to be a beauty. Introduce me, will you?"

"No, I won't," said George shortly. He had been losing all the evening and he felt nervous and irritable.

"Ah! We are too bad, eh?"

George made some fierce reply, and the other fellow struck him. Instantly George sprang to his feet and a fight took place. Mr. Hardy could not bear it any longer. He thought he broke away from the scene by the exercise of a great determination.

Next he found himself looking into his own home. It seemed to him it was an evening when he and all the children had gone out and Mrs. Hardy sat alone, looking into the fire as she had been looking before he fell asleep. She was thinking, and her thoughts were like burning coals as they fell into Mr. Hardy's heart and scorched him, as no other scene, not even the last, had done.

"My husband!" Mrs. Hardy was saying to herself, "how long it is since he gave me a caress, kissed me when he went to his work, or laid his hand lovingly on my cheek as he used to do! How brave and handsome and good I used to think him in the old Vermont days when we were struggling for our little home, and his best thought was of the home and of the wife! But the years have changed him; oh, yes! they have changed him bitterly. I wonder if he realises my hunger for his affection! Of what value to me are all these baubles wealth brings compared with a loving look, a tender smile, an affectionate caress! Oh, Robert! Robert! Come back to me! for I am so lonely, so lonely! Oh, that all our riches might be taken from us and our position in society be lost to us! for I am fast

losing my love for him who is my husband. Great and long-suffering and forgiving God, help me! I feel wicked sometimes. I cannot bear this kind of life. It is killing me. It is robbing me of all that life contains that is sweet and true. O Father of mercies, for Jesus' sake do not let me grow insane or without belief! Oh, Robert, Robert! my lover, my husband; I will, I will love you!" And Mrs. Hardy fell on her knees by the side of the couch and buried her face in its cushions and sobbed and prayed.

Suddenly the whole scene changed, and Mr. Hardy, who had stretched out his arms to comfort his wife as in the old days when love was young, felt himself carried by an irresistible power up away from the earth, past the stars and planets and suns and satellites, that blazed like gems in space; on, on for what seemed to him like ages of time, until even the thought of time grew indistinct; on and up and into the presence of the most mighty Face he had ever looked into. It was the Face of Eternity. On its brow was written in letters of blazing light the one word "Now." And as he looked into that calm, awful Face and read that word, Mr. Hardy felt his soul crumble within him. When the Face spoke it was the speech of a thousand oceans heaved by a million tempests, yet through the terror of it ran a thread of music—a still, sweet sound like everlasting love—as though angels sang somewhere a divine accompaniment. And the Face said:

"Child of humanity, you have neglected and

despised Me for fifty years. You have lived for yourself. You have been careless and thoughtless of the world's great needs. The time of your redemption is short. It has been appointed you by Him who rules the world that you should have but seven more days to live upon the earth—seven days to help redeem your soul from everlasting shame and death. Mortal, see to it that thou use the precious time like those who toil for jewels in the mine beneath the sea. I who speak unto thee am Eternity."

Then Robert Hardy thought he fell prostrate before that awful Face and begged in bitterest terror for a longer lease of life.

"Seven days! Why, it will be but seven swift seconds to redeem my past! Seven days! It will be a nothing in the marking of time! O mighty Power, grant me longer! Seven weeks! Seven years! And I will live for Thee as never mortal yet lived!"

And Robert Hardy sobbed and held his arms beseechingly up toward that most resplendent Face. And as he thus stretched out his arms, the Face bent down toward his, and he thought a smile of pity gleamed upon it, and he hoped that more time would be granted him; and then, as it came nearer, he suddenly awoke, and there was his own wife bending over him, and a tear from her face fell upon his own as she said:

"Robert! Robert!"

Mr. Hardy sat up confused and trembling. Then he clasped his wife to him and kissed her as he used to do. And then to her great amazement he related to her in a low tone the dream he had just had. Mrs. Hardy listened in the most undisguised astonishment. But what followed filled her heart with fear.

"Mary," said her husband with the utmost solemnity, "I cannot regard this as a dream alone. I have awakened with the firm conviction that I have only seven days left to live. I feel that God has spoken to me ; and I have only seven days more to do my work in this world."

"Oh, Robert ! it was only a dream."

"No ; it was more, Mary. You know I am not imaginative or superstitious in the least. You know I never dream. And this was something else. I shall die out of this world a week from to-night. Are the children here ? Call them in."

Mr. Hardy spoke in a tone of such calm conviction that Mrs. Hardy was filled with wonder and fear. She went to the curtain, and, as we have already recorded, she called the children into the other room.

Mr. Hardy gazed upon his children with a look they had not seen upon his face for years. Briefly but calmly he related his experience, omitting the details of the vision and all mention of the scene where George had appeared, and then declared with a solemnity and impressiveness that could not be resisted ;

"My dear children, I have not lived as I should. I have not been to you the father I ought to have been. I have lived a very selfish, useless life. I have only seven more days to live. God has spoken to me. I am——"

He broke off suddenly, and, sobbing as only a strong man can, he drew his wife toward him and caressed her, while Bess crept up and put her arms around her father's neck.

The terrible suspicion shot into Mrs. Hardy's mind that her husband was insane. The children were terrified ; only Alice seemed to catch the reflection of her mother's thought. At the same time Mr. Hardy seemed to feel the suspicion held by them.

"No," he said, as if in answer to a spoken charge, "I am not insane. I never was more calm. I am in possession of all my faculties. But I have looked into the Face of Eternity this night and I know, I know that in seven days God will require my soul. Mary," he turned to his wife with the most beseeching cry, "Mary, do you believe me?"

She looked into her husband's face and saw there the old look. Reason, the noblest of all gifts, shone out of that noble face now lighted up with the old love, and standing on the brink of the other world. And Mrs. Hardy, looking her husband in the face, replied :

"Yes, Robert ; I believe you. You may be mistaken in this impression about the time left you to live, but you are not insane."

"O God, I thank Thee for that!" cried Mr. Hardy.

Often during the most remarkable week he ever lived Mr. Hardy reposed in that implicit belief of his wife in his sanity.

There was a pause. Then Mr. Hardy asked George to bring the Bible. He read from John's Gospel that matchless prayer of Christ in the seventeenth chapter; then, kneeling down, he prayed as he had never prayed before, that in the week allotted him to live he might know how to bless the world and serve his Master best. And when he arose and looked about upon his wife and children, it was with the look of one who has been into the very presence chamber of the only living God. At the same moment, so fast had the time gone in the excitement, the clock upon the mantel struck the hour of midnight—and the first of Robert Hardy's seven days had begun!

MONDAY—THE FIRST DAY.

WHEN Mr. Hardy woke on the morning of the first of the seven days left him to live, he was on the point of getting ready for his day's business, as usual, when the memory of his dream flashed upon him, and he was appalled to decide what he should do first. Breakfast was generally a hurried and silent meal with him. The children usually came down at irregular intervals, and it was seldom that the family all sat down together. This morning Mr. Hardy waited until all had appeared, and while they were eating he held a family council.

His wife was evidently in great excitement and anxiety, and yet the love she felt coming back to her from her husband gave her face a look of beauty that had been a stranger to it for years.

The children were affected in various ways by their father's remarkable change. George was sullen and silent. Will looked thoughtful and troubled. Alice, a girl of very strong and decided opinions and character, greeted her father with a kiss, and seemed to understand the new relations he now sustained to them all. Clara appeared terrified, as though death

had already come into the house, and several times she broke down crying at the table, and finally went away into the sitting room. Bess sat next to her father, as she always did, and was the most cheerful of all, taking a very calm and philosophical view of the situation, so that Mr. Hardy smiled once or twice as she gave her advice.

Mr. Hardy was pale but calm. The impression of the night before was evidently deepening with him. It would have been absurd to call him insane. His wife was obliged to confess to herself that he had never appeared more sound in judgment and calm in speech. He was naturally a man of very strong will. His passions, as we have already seen, were under control. Never in all his life had he felt so self-contained, so free from nervousness, so capable of sustained effort. But the one great thought that filled his mind was that of the shortness of the time.

"Almighty God," was his prayer, "show me how to use these seven days in the wisest and best manner."

"Robert, what will you do to-day?" asked Mrs. Hardy.

"I have been thinking, dear, and I believe my first duty is to God. We have not had morning worship together for a long time. After we have knelt as a family in prayer to Him, I believe He will give me wisdom to know what I ought to do."

"I think father ought to stay at home with us all the time," said Bess.

"Robert," said Mrs. Hardy, who could not comprehend the full meaning of the situation much better than little Bess, "will you give up your business? How can you attend to it? Will you have the strength and the patience while labouring under this impression?"

"I have already thought over that. Yes; I believe I ought to go right on. I don't see what would be gained by severing my connection with the company."

"Will you tell the company you have only——" Mrs. Hardy could not say the words. They choked her.

"What would you do, Alice?" asked her father, turning to his eldest daughter, who had more than once revealed to the family great powers of judgment and decision.

"I would not say anything to the company about it," replied Alice finally.

"That is the way I feel," said Mr. Hardy with a nod of approval. "They would not understand it. My successor in the office will be young Wellman, in all probability, and he is perfectly competent to carry on the work. I feel as though this matter were one that belonged to the family. I shall of course arrange my business affairs with reference to the situation, and George can give me half a day for the details. But you know, Mary, I have always kept my business in such shape that in any case of accident or sudden death matters could easily be

arranged. Thank God, I shall not have to take time for those matters that I ought to give to more serious and important duties."

It was true that Mr. Hardy, who was a man of very methodical habits in a business way, had always arranged his affairs with reference to accidental removal. His business as manager necessitated his being on the line a great deal, and he realised, as many railroad men do realise, the liability of sudden death.

But such a thought had not had any influence on his actions to make him less selfish. He had thought, as all men do, that he should probably live to a green old age after all; that death might take the engineer or conductor or fireman, but would pass him by.

Suddenly Will spoke up: "Father, do you want George and me to leave college?"

"Certainly not, my boy. What would be gained by that? I want you to keep right on just as if I were going to live fifty years more."

George did not say anything. He looked at his father as if he doubted his sanity.

His father noticed the look and a terrible wave of anguish swept over him as he recalled the part of his vision in which he had seen his eldest son in the gambling room.

Again the prayer he had been silently praying all the morning went up out of his heart: "Almighty God, show me how to use the seven days most wisely."

"Father," said Bess suddenly, "what will you do about Jim and Clara? Did you know they were engaged?"

"Bess!" said Clara passionately. Then she stopped suddenly, and seeing her father's brow grow dark, she cowered, afraid of what was coming.

But Mr. Hardy looked at the world differently this morning. Twenty-four hours before he would have treated Bessie's remark as he usually treated her surprising revelations of the secrets of the family. He would have laughed at it a little, and sternly commanded Clara to break the engagement, if there was one, at once: for James Caxton was not at all the sort of man Mr. Hardy wanted to have in the family. He was poor, to begin with. More than all, his father had been the means of defeating Mr. Hardy in a municipal election where a place of influence and honour was in dispute. Mr. Hardy had never forgotten or forgiven it. When he began to see his children intimate with the Caxtons, he forbade their going to the house, with the result already described.

Mr. Hardy looked at Clara and said very tenderly: "Clara, we must have a good talk about this. You know your father loves you and wants you to be happy and——" Mr. Hardy stopped in his emotion, and Clara burst into tears and left the table.

"Come," cried Mr. Hardy after a moment, during which no one seemed inclined to speak, "let us ask God to give us all wisdom at this time."

George made a motion as if to go out.

"My son," called Mr. Hardy after him gently, "won't you stay with the rest of us?"

George sat down with a shamefaced look, Alice and Clara came back, and Mr. Hardy read that famous sixth chapter of Ephesians beginning, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord." Then in a brief but earnest prayer he asked God's help and blessing on all the day, and rose to face it, the great burden of his responsibility beginning to rest upon him for the first time. He sat down for a moment by his wife and kissed her, putting his arms around her, while Bess climbed up on the side of the couch and the boys stood irresolute and wondering. Any outward mark of affection was so unusual on the part of their father that they felt awkward in the presence of it. Mrs. Hardy was almost overcome.

"Oh, Robert, I cannot bear it! Surely it was nothing more than a dream. It couldn't have been anything more. You are not going to be called away from us so soon."

"Mary, I would that I had seven years to atone for my neglect and selfishness towards you alone. But I am certain that God has granted me but seven days. I must act. God help me! Boys, you will be late. We will all be at home this evening. Alice, care for your mother and cheer her up. You are a good girl and——"

Again Mr. Hardy broke down as he thought of

the many years he had practically ignored this brave, strong, uncomplaining nature in his own house, and remorse tore him fiercely as he recalled how he had persistently discouraged all the poor girl's ambitious efforts to make her way as an artist, not on account of the expense—for Mr. Hardy was not a niggard in that respect—but because he had a false idea concerning the profession. He looked at the girl now as she limped across the floor to her mother, her pale, intellectual face brightened by her love and her eyes shining with tears at her father's unusual praise. "O God," was the inner cry of Mr. Hardy's heart, "what have I not neglected when I had it in my power to create so much happiness!"

The thought almost unnerved him, and for a moment he felt like sitting down to do nothing. But only for a moment. He rose briskly, went out into the hall and put on his overcoat, and coming back a moment said, "I am going down to see poor Scoville the first thing. I shall be so busy you must not look for me at lunch. But I shall be back to six o'clock dinner. Good-bye!" He kissed his wife tenderly, and she clung to him sobbing. Then he kissed his daughters, a thing he had not done since they were babies, and shook hands with the boys and marched out like one going to execution, something bright glistening in his own eyes.

Ah! ye fathers and husbands, you who are toiling for the dear ones at home, how many of you have grown so unaccustomed to the tender

affections of home that your own wife would almost faint and think something was going to happen to you if you kissed her good-bye when you went away to your work in the morning! How do you know that she who has been your faithful friend and lover all these years, and nursed you through peevish sickness and done a thousand things every day for you without so much as a word of thanks or praise on your part—how do you know she does not care for these demonstrations of affection? And if she does not, how does it happen except through neglect? Call it not a little thing. It is of such little things that heaven is made, and it is of the home where such little things are found that it can truly be said, "Love is master, and the evil one cannot find an entrance to blot with his foul tread the sweetest thing on earth."

Mr. Hardy hurried down towards the tenement where Ward Scoville lived, revolving in his mind as he went along plans for his future happiness and comfort.

"I'll buy the place where he lives, and arrange it in some way so that he won't have to go to the hospital or come on the county when his poor wife is gone. It will be the best I can do for him. Poor fellow! What a shame I did not come down last night! And his wife a hopeless invalid and the eldest child only four years old, Mary said!"

He was surprised as he drew near the house to see a group of men standing there outside and

talking together earnestly. As Mr. Hardy came up they stood aside to let him pass, but were barely civil.

"Well, Stevens," Mr. Hardy inquired of one of the men, recognising him as one of the employés in the casting room, "how is Scoville this morning?"

"Dead!"

Mr. Hardy reeled as if struck in the breast with a heavy blow.

"Dead, did you say?"

"He died about an hour ago," said one of the other men. "The surgeon was late in getting here, and after the amputation it was ascertained that Scoville had received severe internal injuries."

"Was he conscious?" Mr. Hardy asked the question mechanically, but all the while his mind was in a whirl of remorse.

"Yes; up to the last moment."

Mr. Hardy went up to the door and knocked. A woman, one of the neighbours, opened it and he went in. The sight stunned him. The dead man had been removed to a rear room, but his wife lay upon the very same ragged lounge Mr. Hardy had seen in his dream. The surgeon was bending over her. The room was full of neighbours.

The surgeon suddenly arose and, turning about, spoke in a quiet but decided tone:

"Now then, good people, just go home, will you, for a while? And suppose some of you take these children along with you. You can't do anything

more now, and your presence disturbs the woman! Ah, Mr. Hardy!" he exclaimed, seeing the manager, "you here? This is a sad business. Come, now, ladies, I must ask you to retire."

Everybody went out except the surgeon, the poor woman's sister, and Mr. Hardy. He drew the surgeon over to the window and inquired concerning the particulars. Mr. Hardy had received a shock at the very first and he trembled violently.

"Well, you see," explained the surgeon, "Scoville was a dead man from the minute of the accident. Nothing could have saved him. When the accident happened I was down at Bayville attending the men who were injured in the wreck last Saturday. I telegraphed that I would come at once. But there was a delay on the road, and I did not get here until three o'clock in the morning. Meanwhile everything had been done that was possible. But nothing could save the poor fellow. This shock will kill his wife. I doubt if she will live through the day."

"What will be done with the children?" Mr. Hardy asked the question mechanically, again feeling the need of time to think out what was best to be done. The surgeon shrugged his shoulders. He was accustomed to scenes of suffering and distress continually.

"Orphans' Home, I suppose," he replied laconically.

A movement and a moan from the woman called him to her side, and Mr. Hardy, left alone, thought a

moment, then stepped over to the surgeon and asked him if he could go into the other room and see the dead man. The surgeon nodded a surprised assent, and Mr. Hardy stepped into the rear room and closed the door. He drew back the sheet from the face of the man and looked down upon it. Nothing in all his experience had ever moved him so deeply. The features of the dead man were fixed, it seemed to him, in an expression of despair. Mr. Hardy gazed steadily upon it for half a minute, then replacing the sheet he knelt down by the side of the rude bed and prayed God for mercy. "O Lord," he groaned in his remorse, "lay not the death of this man to my charge!" Yet, even as he prayed, he could not drive back the thought which chased across the prayer, "I am this man's murderer. I issued the order compelling the Sunday work. I refused a week ago to inspect the retorts which were declared unsafe, on the ground that it was not my business. I compelled this man to work under the fear of losing his place if he refused to work. I compelled him to work on the one day in which God has commanded all men to rest. I, a Christian by profession, a member of the church, a man of means—I put this man in deadly peril upon a Sunday in order that more money might be made and more human selfishness might be gratified. I did it. And this man once saved my life. I am his murderer, and no murderer shall inherit the kingdom of God."

So the wretched man prayed there by the side of

that cold body. Yet the world to-day goes on with men in high places who have it in their power to change the conditions that exact Sunday labour from thousands of weary men and drive the commerce of the world across the continent at the cost of that priceless thing, the soul of man, in order that the owners of railroad stock and the men who get their salaried living from it may have more money. What! is it not true that every Sunday in this land of Christian homes and hearts many and many a well-fed, sleek, self-satisfied, well-dressed man with a high salary and well-established social position, with a luxurious home and money in the bank, goes to church and sits down in a softly cushioned pew to listen to the preaching of the gospel, while within hearing distance of the services an express or luggage train thunders by upon the road which declares the dividends that make that man's wealth possible? On those trains are groups of coal-begrimed human beings who never go inside a church, who never speak the name of God or Christ except in an oath, who lead lives that are as destitute of spiritual nourishment as a desert of sand and rocks, and who are compelled to labour contrary to God's everlasting law of rest, in order that man may have more to feed his body and indulge his passions! Do not tell us it is necessary labour. It is labour for the making of more money. It does not need to be done. The community could dispense with it; in the sight of God it is a wicked use of human flesh and blood and

souls ; and the starved spiritual natures of these men will come up at the Judgment Day before the men who had it in their power to say, "Not a wheel shall turn on these tracks on Sunday, even if we don't make a little more money." Money or souls ! Which is worth more in the thought of the railroad corporation ? Let the facts make answer.

Mr. Hardy did not know just how long he kneeled there in that bare room. At last he arose wearily and came out ; his prayer had not refreshed him. The surgeon glanced at him inquisitively but asked no questions. The sick woman was in a state of semi-unconsciousness. Mr. Hardy's cook, her sister, sat listlessly and worn out by the side of the lounge. The surgeon rapidly gave directions for the use of some medicine and prepared to go. Some of the neighbours called, and the surgeon let two of the women come in. Just as the two men were going out together, Mr. Hardy still absorbed in his great desire to do something of importance for the mother and her children, his minister, Mr. Jones, appeared.

He looked surprised at seeing Mr. Hardy, inquired the news of the doctor, and at once asked if he could see the poor widow. The doctor thought it would do no harm. Mr. Jones whispered to Mr. Hardy :

"She was a faithful member of our church, you know."

Mr. Hardy did not know it, to his shame he

confessed. This sister of his in Christ had been a member of the same church and he had not even known it. If she had happened to sit on the same side of the building where he sat, he would probably have wondered who that plain-looking person was, dressed so poorly. But she had always sat back on the other side, being one of a few poor women who had been attracted into the church and been comforted by Mr. Jones' simple piety and prayers.

The minister kneeled down and said a gentle word to the woman. Then as if in reply to a low-voiced request he began a prayer of remarkable beauty and comfort. Mr. Hardy wondered, as he listened, that he could ever have thought this man dull in the pulpit. He sat down and sobbed as the prayer went on, and took to himself the consolation of that heavenly petition. When Mr. Jones rose, Mr. Hardy still sat with his hands over his face. The surgeon was called out by some one. Then the minister, after making arrangements for the funeral of Scoville with the women who had come in, started to go out, when Mr. Hardy rose and they went away together.

"Mr. Jones," said Mr. Hardy as they walked along, "I have an explanation and a confession to make. I haven't time to make it now, but I want to say that I have met God face to face within the past twenty-four hours, and I am conscious for the first time for years of the intensely selfish life I have lived. I need your prayers and help. And I want

to serve the church and do my duty there as I never before have done it. I have not supported your work as I should. I want you to think of me this week as ready to help in anything in my power. Will you accept my apology for my contempt of your request a week ago? I will come into the meeting on Thursday night and help in any way possible."

Mr. Jones' eyes filled with tears. He grasped Mr. Hardy's hand and said simply:

"Brother, God bless you! Let me be of service to you in any way I can."

Mr. Hardy felt a little better for the partial confession, and parted with his minister at the next corner, going down to his office.

It was now ten o'clock, and the day seemed to him cruelly brief for the work he had to do. He entered the office, and almost the first thing he saw on his desk was the following letter, addressed to him but written in a disguised hand:

MR. HARDY,—Us in the casting room don't need no looking after but maybe the next pot of hot iron that explodes will be next the offis if you thinks we have bodies but no sols some morning you will wake up beleiving another thing. We ain't so easy led as sum supposes. Better look to house and employ spesul patrol; if you do we will blak his face for him.

There was no signature to this threatening scrawl, which was purposely misspelled and ungrammatically composed. Mr. Hardy had received threats before and paid little attention to them. He prided himself on his steady nerves and his contempt of all such methods used to scare him. Only a coward, he reasoned, would ever write an anonymous letter of such a character. Still, this morning he felt disturbed. His peculiar circumstances made the whole situation take on a more vivid colouring. Besides all that, he could not escape the conviction that he was in a certain sense responsible for the accident in the casting room. It was not his particular business to inspect machinery. But his attention had been called to it, and he felt now as though he had been criminally careless in not making the inspection in the absence of the regular officer. An investigation of the accident would free Mr. Hardy from legal responsibility. But in the sight of God he felt that he was morally guilty. At this moment Mr. Burns came in. He looked sullen and spoke in a low tone :

"Only half the men are back this morning, sir. Scoville's death and the injuries of the others have had a bad effect on the men."

Mr. Hardy crumpled the letter nervously in his hand.

"Mr. Burns, I would like to apologise to you for my neglect of the injured men. Who are they and how badly are they hurt?"

Burns looked surprised, but made answer, describing briefly the accidents. Mr. Hardy listened intently with bowed head. At last he looked up and said abruptly :

“Come into the casting room.”

They went out of the office, passed through the repairing shops, and entered the foundry department. Even on that bright winter morning, with the air outside so clear and cool, the atmosphere in this place was murky and close. The forges in the blacksmiths' room at the farther end glowed through the smoke and dust like smouldering piles of rubbish dumped here and there by chance upon some desolate moor and stirred by ill-omened demons of the nether world. Mr. Hardy shuddered as he thought of standing in such an atmosphere all day to work at severe muscular toil. He recalled with a sharp vividness a request made only two months before for dust fans which had proved successful in other shops, and which would remove a large part of the heavy, coal-laden air, supplying fresh air in its place. The company had refused the request, and had even said through one of its officers that when the men wore out the company could easily get more.

Mr. Hardy and the foreman paused at the entrance to the casting room where the men had been injured the day before. A few men were working sullenly. Mr. Hardy asked the foreman to call the men together near the other end of the

room; he wanted to say something to them. He walked over there while the foreman spoke to the men. They dropped their tools and came over to where Mr. Hardy was standing. They were mostly Scandinavians and Germans, with a sprinkling of Irish and Americans. Mr. Hardy looked at them thoughtfully. They were a hard-looking crowd. Then he said very slowly and distinctly:

"You may quit work until after Scoville's funeral. The machinery here needs overhauling."

The men stood impassive for a moment. Finally a big Dane stepped up and said:

"We be no minded to quit work these times. We no can afford it. Give us work in some other place."

Mr. Hardy looked at him and replied quietly:

"The wages will go on just the same while you are out."

There was a perceptible stir among the men. They looked confused and incredulous. Mr. Hardy still looked at them thoughtfully.

Finally the big Dane stepped forward again and said, speaking more respectfully than he did at first:

"Mr. Hardy, we be thinking maybe you would like to help towards him the family of the dead and others as be hurt. I've been 'pointed to take up purse for poor fellows injured. We all take hand in't. My brother be one lose his two eyes."

A tear actually rolled down the grimy cheek of the big fellow and dropped into the coal-dust at his

feet. Mr. Hardy realised that he was looking at a brother man. He choked down a sob, and putting his hand into his pocket pulled out all the change he had and poured it into the Dane's hand. Then seeing that it was only four or five dollars, he pulled out his purse and emptied that of its bills, while Burns, the foreman, and all the men looked on in stupefied wonder.

"No, no thanks! I'll do something more."

Mr. Hardy walked away feeling as if the ground were heaving under him. What was all his money compared with that life which had been sacrificed in that gas-poisoned sepulchre! He could not banish from his mind the picture of that face as it looked to him when he drew back the sheet and looked at it.

Mr. Hardy hurried back to the office through the yard and sat down at the well-worn desk. The mail had come in and half a dozen letters lay there. He looked at them and shuddered. What did it all amount to, this grind of business, when the heartache of the world called for so much sympathy! Then over him came the sense of his obligations to his family: Clara's need of a father's help; George going to the bad; Alice in need of sympathy; his wife weeping even now at home; the church and Sunday-school where he had been of so little use; the family of Scoville to be provided for; the other injured men to be visited; improvements for the welfare of the men in the shops to be looked after; the routine of his business,—all these things crowded

in upon him, and still he saw the Face and heard the voice of Eternity: "Seven days more to live!"

He sank into a reverie for a moment. He was roused by the sounding of the noon whistle. What, noon already? So swiftly had the time gone! He turned to his desk bewildered and picked up his letters, glanced over them hurriedly, and gave directions for the answers of some of them to his impatient clerk, who had been wondering at his employer's strange behaviour this morning. Among the letters was one which made his cheek burn with self-reproach. It was an invitation to a dinner to be given that evening in honour of some visiting railroad president.

It was just such an occasion as he had enjoyed very many times before, and the recollection brought to mind the number of times he had gone away from his own home and left his wife sitting drearily by the fire. How could he have done it! He tossed the gilded invitation fiercely into the waste basket and rising walked his room thinking, thinking. He had so much to do and so little time to do it in! He thought thus a moment, then went out and walked rapidly over to the hotel where he was in the habit of having lunch when he did not go home. He ate a little, hurriedly, and then hastened out.

As he was going out upon the pavement two young men came in and jostled against him. They were smoking and talking in a loud tone. Mr. Hardy caught the sound of his own name. He looked at

the speaker, and it was the face of the young man he had seen in his dream, the one who had insulted George and struck him afterwards. For a moment Mr. Hardy was tempted to confront the youth and inquire into his son's habits.

"No," he said to himself after a pause; "I will have a good talk with George himself. That will be the best."

He hurried back to the office and arranged some necessary work for his clerk, took a walk through the other office, then went to the telephone and called up the superintendent of the Sunday-school, who was a bookkeeper in a clothing house. He felt an intense desire to arrange for an interview with him as soon as possible. Word came back from the house that the superintendent had been called out of town by serious illness in his old home and would not be back until Saturday. Mr. Hardy felt a disappointment more keen than the occasion seemed to warrant. He was conscious that the time was very brief. He had fully made up his mind that so far as in him lay he would redeem his selfish past and make a week such as few men ever made. He was just beginning to realise that circumstances are not always in our control. We are all obliged to wait for time to do some things. We cannot redeem seven years of selfishness with seven days of self-denial. The death of Scoville revealed to Mr. Hardy his powerlessness in the face of certain possibilities. He now feared that the

superintendent would fail to return in time to let him confess to him his just sorrow for his lack of service in the school. He sat down to his desk and under that impulse wrote a letter that expressed in part how he felt. Then he jotted down the following items to be referred to the proper authorities of the railroad :

Item 1. The dust in the blacksmiths' shop and in the brass-polishing rooms is largely unnecessary. The new Englefield revolving rolling fans and elevator ought to be introduced in both departments. The cost would be but a small item to the company, and would prolong the life and add to the comfort of the employés. Very important.

Item 2. Organised and intelligent effort should be made by all railroad corporations to lessen Sunday work in shops and on the line. All perishable freight should be so handled as to call for the services of as few men on Sunday as possible, and excursion and passenger trains should be discontinued, except in cases of unavoidable necessity.

Item 3. The inspection of boilers, retorts, castings, machinery of all kinds should be made by thoroughly competent and responsible men who shall answer for all unnecessary accidents by swift and severe punishment in case of loss of life or limb.

Item 4. In case of injury or death to employés if incurred through the neglect of the company to provide safety, it should provide financial relief for

the families thus injured, or stricken by death, and so far as possible arrange for their future.

Item 5. Any well-organised railroad could with profit to its employés have upon its staff of salaried men a *corps* of chaplains or preachers, whose business it would be to look after the religious interests of the employés.

Under this last item Mr. Hardy wrote in a footnote: "Discuss feasibility of this with Mr. B——, influential director."

It was now three o'clock. The short winter day was fast drawing to a close. The hum of the great engine in the machine shop was growing very wearisome to the manager. He felt sick of its throbbing tremor and longed to escape from it. Ordinarily he would have gone to the club-room and had a game of chess with a member, or else he would have gone down and idled away an hour or two before supper at the Art Museum, where he was a visitor whenever he had plenty of time and the business of the office was not pressing. Young Wellman had succeeded to the clerical details of the shops, and Mr. Hardy's time was generally free after four.

He had been oppressed with the thought of the other injured men. He must go and see them. He could not rest till he had personally visited them. He went out and easily ascertained where the men lived. Never before did the contrast between the

dull, uninteresting row of shop tenements and his own elegant home rise up so sharply before him. In fact, he had never given it much thought before. Now, as he looked forward to the end of the week, and knew that at its close he would be no richer, no better able to enjoy luxuries than the dead man lying in his humble home, he wondered vaguely but passionately how he could make use of what he had heaped together to make the daily lives of some of these poor men happier.

He found the man who had lost both eyes sitting up in bed and feeling, in a pathetic manner, a few blocks of wood which one of the children in the room had brought to him. He was a big, powerful man, like his brother, the large-boned Dane, and it seemed a very pitiful thing that he should be lying there like a baby when his muscles were as powerful as ever. The brother was in the room with the injured man, and he said to him :

“Olaf, Mr. Hardy come to see you.”

“Hardy ? Hardy ?” queried the man in a peevish tone. “What do I know him to be ?”

“The manager. The one who gave so much moneys to you.”

“Ah ?” with an indescribable accent. “He make me work on a Sunday. He lose me my two eyes. A bad man, Svord ! I will no have anything to do with him.”

And the old descendant of a thousand kings turned his face to the wall, and would not even so

much as make a motion towards his visitor. His brother offered a rude apology. Mr. Hardy replied in a low tone :

“Say nothing about it. I deserve all your brother says. But for a good reason I wish Olaf would say he forgives me.”

Mr. Hardy came nearer the bed and spoke very earnestly and as if he had known the man intimately :

“I did you a great wrong to order the work on Sunday, and in not doing my duty concerning the inspection of the machinery. I have come to say so, and to ask your forgiveness. I may never see you again. Will you say to me, ‘Brother, I forgive you’?”

There was a moment of absolute passivity on the part of the big fellow, then a very large and brawny hand was extended and the blind man said :

“Yes, I forgive. We learned that in the old Bible at Svendorf.”

Mr. Hardy laid his hand in the other, and his lips moved in prayer of humble thanksgiving. What ! Is this that proud man who only the day before was so lifted up with selfishness that he could coldly criticise his own minister for saying that people ought to be more Christlike ? Are you standing here in this poor man’s house, which two days ago you would not have deigned to enter, and beseeching him as your brother in the great family of God to forgive you for what you have done and left undone ? Yes ; you have looked into the Face of Eternity ; you

realise now what life really means and what souls are really worth.

He went out after a few words with the family, and saw all the other injured men. By the time he had finished these visits it was dark, and he eagerly turned home, exhausted with the day's experience, feeling as if he had lived in a new world and at the same time wondering at the rapidity with which the time had fled.

He sighed almost contentedly to himself as he thought of the evening with his family and how he would enjoy it after the disquiet of the day. His wife was there to greet him, and Alice and Clara and Bess clung about him as he took off his coat and came into the beautiful room where a cheerful fire was blazing. Will came downstairs as his father came in, and in the brief interval before dinner was ready Mr. Hardy related the scenes of the day.

They were all shocked to hear of Scoville's death, and Mrs. Hardy at once began to discuss some plans for relieving the family. Bess volunteered to give up half her room to one of the children, and Alice quietly outlined a plan which immediately appeared to her father business-like and feasible. In the midst of this discussion dinner was announced, and they all sat down.

"Where is George?" asked Mr. Hardy. Ordinarily he would have gone on with the meal without any reference to the boy, because he was so often

absent from the table. To-night he felt an irresistible longing to have all his children with him.

"He said he was invited out to dinner with the Bramleys," said Clara.

Mr. Hardy received the announcement in silence. He felt the bitterness of such indifference on the part of his elder son. "What!" he said to himself; "when he knows I had such a little while left, could he not be at home?" Then almost immediately flashed into him the self-reproach even stronger than his condemnation of his boy: "How much have I done for him these last ten years to win his love and protect him from evil?"

After supper Mr. Hardy sat down by his wife, and in the very act he blushed with shame at the thought that he could not recall when he had spent an evening thus. He looked into her face and asked gently:

"Mary, what do you want me to do? Shall I read, as we used to in the old days?"

"No; let us talk together," replied Mrs. Hardy, bravely driving back her tears. "I cannot realise what it all means. I have been praying all day. Have you still the impression you had this morning?"

"Mary, I am if anything even more convinced that God has spoken to me. The impression has been deepening with me all day. When I looked into poor Scoville's face, the terrible nature of my past selfish life almost overwhelmed me. Oh, why have I abused God's goodness to me so awfully?"

There was silence a moment. Then Mr. Hardy grew more calm. He began to discuss what he would do the second day. He related more fully the interview with the men in the shop and his visits to the injured. He drew Clara to him and began to inquire into her troubles in such a tender, loving way that Clara's proud, passionate, wilful nature broke down, and she sobbed out her story to him as she had to her mother the night before.

Mr. Hardy promised Clara that he would see James the next day. It was true that James Caxton had only a week before approached Mr. Hardy and told him in very manful fashion of his love for his daughter ; but Mr. Hardy had treated it as a child's affair and, in accordance with his usual policy in family matters, had simply told Clara and Bess to discontinue their visits at the old neighbour's. But now that he heard the story from the lips of his own daughter he saw the seriousness of it, and crowding back all his former pride and hatred of the elder Caxton he promised Clara to see James the next day.

Clara clung to her father in loving surprise. She was bewildered, as were all the rest, by the strange event that had happened to her father ; but she never had so felt his love before, and forgetting for a while the significance of his wonderful dream, she felt happy in his presence and in his affection for her.

The evening had sped on with surprising rapidity while all these matters were being discussed, and as

it drew near to midnight again Robert Hardy felt almost happy in the atmosphere of that home and the thought that he could still for a little while create joy for those who loved him. Suddenly he spoke of his other son :

“ I wish George would come in. Then our family circle would be complete. But it is bed-time for you, Bess, and all of us, for that matter.”

It was just then that steps were heard on the front porch, and voices as if talking in whispers. The bell rang. Mr. Hardy rose to go to the door. His wife clung to him terrified.

“ Oh, don't go, Robert ! I am afraid for you.”

“ Why, Mary, it cannot be anything to harm me. Don't be alarmed.”

Nevertheless he was a little startled. The day had been a trying one for him. He went to the door, his wife and the children following him close behind. He threw it wide open, and there, supported by two of his companions, one of them the young man Mr. Hardy had seen in the hotel lobby at noon, was his son George, too drunk to stand alone ! He leered into the face of his father and mother with a drunken look that froze their souls with despair, as the blaze of the hall lamp fell upon him reeling there.

So the first of Robert Hardy's seven days came to an end.

TUESDAY—THE SECOND DAY.

MR. HARDY was a man of great will power, but this scene with his drunken son crushed him for a moment and seemed to take the very soul out of him. Mrs. Hardy at first uttered a wild cry ; then she ran forward, and seizing her elder son almost dragged him into the house, while Mr. Hardy, recovering from his first shock, looked sternly at the companions of the lad and then shut the door. That night was a night of sorrow in that family. The sorrow of death is not to be compared with it.

But morning came, as it comes alike to the condemned criminal and to the pure-hearted child on a holiday, and after a brief and troubled rest Mr. Hardy awoke to his second day, the memory of the night coming to him at first as an ugly dream, but afterward as a terrible reality. His boy drunk ! He could not make it seem possible. Yet there in the next room he lay, in a drunken stupor, sleeping off the effects of his debauch of the night before. Mr. Hardy fell on his knees and prayed for mercy, again repeating the words, "Almighty God, help me to

use the remaining days in the wisest and best manner." Then calming himself by a tremendous effort he rose and faced the day's work as bravely as any man could under such circumstances.

After a family council, in which all of them, on account of their troubles, were drawn nearer together than ever before, Mr. Hardy outlined the day's work something as follows:

First, he would go and see James Caxton and talk over the affair between him and Clara. Then he would go down to the office and arrange some necessary details of his business. If possible, he would come home to lunch. In the afternoon he would go to poor Scoville's funeral, which had been arranged for two o'clock. Mrs. Hardy announced her intention to go also. Then Mr. Hardy thought he would have a talk with George and spend the evening at home, arranging matters with reference to his own death. With this programme in mind, he finally went away, after an affectionate leave-taking with his wife and children.

George slept heavily until the middle of the forenoon, and then awoke with a raging headache. Bess had several times during the morning stolen into the room to see if her brother were awake. When he did finally turn over and open his eyes, he saw the young girl standing by the bedside. He groaned as he recalled the night and his mother's look, and Bess said timidly as she laid her hand on his forehead:

"George, I'm so sorry for you! Don't you feel well?"

"I feel as if my head would split open. It aches as if some one were chopping wood inside of it."

"What makes you feel so?" asked Bess innocently. "Did you eat too much supper at the Bramleys?"

Bess had never seen any one drunk before, and when George was helped to bed the night before by his father and mother she did not understand his condition. She had always adored her big brother. It was not strange she had no idea of his habits.

George looked at his small sister curiously; then, under an impulse he could not explain, he drew her nearer to him and said:

"Bess, I'm a bad fellow. I was drunk last night! Drunk!—do you understand? And I've nearly killed mother!"

Bess was aghast at the confession. She put out her hand again.

"Oh, no, George!" Then with a swift revulsion of feeling she drew back and said: "How *could* you, with father feeling as he does?"

And little Bess, who was a creature of very impulsive emotions, sat down crying on what she supposed was a cushion, but which was George's tall hat, accidentally covered with one end of a comforter which had slipped off the bed. Bess was a very plump little creature, and as she picked herself up and held up the hat, George angrily exclaimed:

"You're always smashing my things!" But the next minute he was sorry for the words.

Bess retreated toward the door, quivering under the injustice of the charge. At the door she halted. She had something of Clara's passionate temper, and once in a while she let even her adored brother George feel it, small as she was.

"George Hardy, if you think more of your old stovepipe hat than you do of your sister, all right! You'll never get any more of my month's allowance. And if I do smash your things, I don't come home drunk at night and break mother's heart. That's what she's crying about this morning—that, and father's queer ways. Oh, dear, I don't want to live; life is so full of trouble!" And little twelve-year-old Bess sobbed in genuine sorrow.

George forgot his headache for a minute.

"Come, Bess, come, let's kiss and make it up. Honest, now, I didn't mean it. I was bad to say what I did. I'll buy a dozen hats and let you sit on them for fun. Don't go away angry; I'm so miserable!"

He lay down and groaned, and Bess went to him immediately, all her anger vanished.

"Oh, let me get you something to drive away your headache; and I'll bring you up something nice to eat. Mother had Norah save something for you—didn't you, mother?"

Bessie asked the question just as her mother came in.

Mrs. Hardy said "Yes," and going up to George sat down by him and laid her hand on his head as his sister had done.

The lad moved uneasily. He saw the marks of great suffering on his mother's face, but he said nothing to express sorrow for his disgrace.

"Bess, will you go and get George his breakfast?" asked Mrs. Hardy; and the minute she was gone the mother turned to her son and said:

"George, do you love me?"

George had been expecting something different. He looked at his mother as the tears fell down her face, and all that was still good in him rose up in rebellion against the animal part. He seized his mother's hand and carried it to his lips, kissed it reverently, and said in a low tone:

"Mother, I am unworthy. If you knew——"

He checked himself as if on the verge of confession. His mother waited anxiously, and then asked:

"Won't you tell me all?"

"No; I can't!"

George shuddered, and at that moment Bess came in bearing a tray with toast and eggs and coffee. Mrs. Hardy left Bess to look after her brother and went out of the room almost abruptly. George looked ashamed, and after eating a little told Bess to take the things away. She looked grieved, and he said:

"Can't help it; I'm not hungry. Besides, I don't

deserve all this attention. I say, Bess, is father still acting under his impression, or dream, or whatever it was ?”

“Yes, he is,” replied Bessie with much seriousness, “and he is ever so good now, and kisses mother and all of us good-bye in the morning ; and he is kind and ever so good. I don’t believe he is in his right mind. Will said yesterday he thought father was *non campus meant us* ; and then he wouldn’t tell me what it meant ; but I guess he doesn’t think father is just right intellectually.”

Now and then Bess got hold of a big word and used it for all it would bear. She said “intellectually” over twice, and George laughed a little, but it was a bitter laugh, not such as a lad of his age has any business to possess. He lay down and appeared to be thinking, and after a while said aloud :

“I wonder if he would let me have some money while he’s feeling that way ?”

“Who ?” queried Bess. “Father ?”

“What ! you here still, Curiosity ? Better take these things downstairs !”

George spoke with his “headache tone,” as Clara called it, and Bess, without reply, gathered up the tray things and went out, while George continued to figure out in his hardly yet sober brain the possibility of his father letting him have more money with which to gamble.

In the very next room Mrs. Hardy kneeled in an agony of petition for that firstborn son, crying out

of her heart : " O God, it is more than I can bear ! To see him growing away from me so ! Dear Lord, be Thou merciful to me. Bring him back again to the life he used to live ! How proud I was of him ! What a joy he was to me ! And now, and now ! O gracious Father, if Thou art truly compassionate, hear me ! Has not this foul demon of drink done harm enough ? And yet it still comes, and even into my home ! Ah, I have been indifferent to the cries of other women, but now it strikes me ! Spare me, great and powerful Almighty ! My boy ! my heart's hunger is for him ! I would rather see him dead than see him as I saw him last night. Spare me ! spare me, O God ! " Thus the mother prayed, dry-eyed and almost despairing, while he for whom she prayed that heart-broken prayer calculated, with growing coldness of mind, the chances of getting more money from his father to use in drink and at the gaming table.

O appetite, and thou spirit of gambling, ye are twin demons with whom many a fair-browed young soul to-day is marching arm in arm down the dread pavement of hell's vestibule, lined with grinning skeletons of past victims ! Yet men gravely discuss the probability of evil, and think there is no special danger in a little speculation now and then. Parents say, " Oh, *my* boy wouldn't do such a thing ! " But how many know what their boy is really doing, and how many of the young men would dare reveal to their mothers or fathers the places where they have

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been and the amusements they have tasted, and the things for which they have spent their money ?

Mr. Hardy went at once to his neighbours, the Caxtons, who lived only a few yards away. He had not been on speaking terms with the family for some time, and he dreaded the interview with the sensitiveness of a very proud and stern-willed man. But two days had made a great change in him. He was a new man in Christ Jesus ; and as he rang the bell he prayed for wisdom and humility.

James himself came to the door with his overcoat on and hat in hand, evidently just ready to go out. He started back at seeing Mr. Hardy.

"Are you going out ? I will not come in then, but walk along with you," said Mr. Hardy quietly.

So James came out, and the two walked along together. There was an awkward pause for a minute, then Mr. Hardy said :

"James, is it true that you and Clara are engaged ?"

"No, sir ; that—is—not exactly what you might call engaged. We would *like* to be." Mr. Hardy smiled in spite of himself ; and James added in a quickened tone, "We would like to be, with your consent, sir."

Mr. Hardy walked on thoughtfully and then glanced at the young man at his side. He was six feet tall, not very handsome, as Bessie had frankly said, but he had a good face, a steady, clear blue

eye, and a resolute air, as of one who was willing to work hard to get what he wanted. Mr. Hardy could not help contrasting him with his own prematurely broken-down son George, and he groaned inwardly as he thought of the foolish pride that would bar the doors of his family to a young man like James Caxton simply because he was poor and because his father had won in a contested election in which the two elder men were candidates for the same office.

It did not take long to think all this. Then he said, looking again at the young man with a business-like look :

"Supposing you had my permission, what are your prospects for supporting my daughter? She has always had everything she wanted. What could you give her?"

The question might have seemed cold and business-like. The tone was thoughtful and serious.

A light flashed into James's eyes, but he said simply: "I am in a position to make a thousand dollars a-year next spring. I earn something extra with my pen at home."

Mr. Hardy did not reply to this. He said: "Do you know what a wilful, quick-tempered girl Clara is?"

"I have known her from a little child, Mr. Hardy. I feel as if I know her about as well as you do."

"Perhaps you know her better than I do; I do not know my child as I should."

The tone was not bitter but intensely sad. The

young man had of course been greatly wondering at this talk from Mr. Hardy, and had observed the change in his manner and his speech. He looked at him now and noted his pale, almost haggard face and his extremely thoughtful appearance.

"Mr. Hardy," said James frankly, "you are in trouble. I wish I could——"

"Thank you; no, you can't help me in this—except," continued Mr. Hardy with a faint smile, "except you solve this trouble between you and my daughter."

"There is no trouble between us, sir," replied James simply. "You know I love her and have loved her for a long time, and I believe I am able to support her and make her happy. Won't you give your consent, sir? We are not children. We know our minds."

James spoke very earnestly. He was beginning to hope that the stern, proud man who had so curtly dismissed him a little while before would in some unaccountable manner relent and give him his heart's desire.

Mr. Hardy walked along in silence a little way. Then he said almost abruptly:

"James, do you drink?"

"No, sir!"

"Or gamble?"

"You forget my mother, Mr. Hardy." The reply was almost stern.

Mrs. Caxton's younger brother had been ruined

by gambling. He had come to the house one night, and in a fit of anger because his sister would not give him money to carry on his evil habits he had threatened her life. James had interposed and at the risk of his own life had probably saved his mother's. Mrs. Caxton had been so unnerved by the scene that her health had suffered from it seriously. All this had happened when James was growing out of boyhood. But not a day had passed that the young man did not see a sad result of that great gambling passion in his own mother's face and bearing. He loathed the thought of a vice so debasing that it ignored all the tender ties of kindred and was ready to stop at nothing in order to get means for its exercise.

Mr. Hardy knew the story, and he exclaimed: "Forgive me, James, I did not think!" Then, after a pause, "Are you a Christian? I mean, have you a faith in the revelation of God to men through Jesus Christ, and do you try to live according to His teachings, with a supreme love for God controlling your life? Do you live every day as if it might be the last you would have to live?"

James started. Was Mr. Hardy out of his mind? He had never heard him talk like this before. The idea of Mr. Hardy caring about his religious character in the event of his becoming a son-in-law was an idea too remote for occurrence. He could see, however, that some very powerful change had taken place in Mr. Hardy's usual demeanour. His words also pro-

duced a strong effect upon the young man. He was like thousands of young men—temperate, honest, industrious, free from vices, strictly moral, but without any decided religious faith. “Am I a Christian?” he asked himself, echoing Mr. Hardy’s question. No; he could not say that he was. He had never said so to any one. He had in fact never been confronted with the question before. So he replied to Mr. Hardy:

“No, sir; I don’t think I am what would be called a Christian. As for living as if every day were to be my last—do you think that is possible, sir?”

Mr. Hardy did not answer. He walked along thoughtfully. In the course of the conversation they had reached the corner where the young man turned down to his office, and the two paused.

“I want to have another talk with you,” Mr. Hardy said. “To-day is Tuesday; say to-morrow evening. I want to see your father also, and——” Mr. Hardy was on the point of saying that he wanted to ask the elder Caxton’s forgiveness, but for some reason he stopped without doing so.

James exclaimed eagerly as Mr. Hardy turned to go:

“Then you don’t forbid my entertaining some hope of your goodwill in the matter of my love for Clara?” He lowered his voice and spoke very strongly. “You don’t forget your own youth, and the way in which you yourself began your home?”

Mr. Hardy answered never a word to this appeal, but looked into the young man's face with a gaze he did not forget all day, then wrung his hand and turned on his heel abruptly and walked rapidly down the street.

James looked after him as he disappeared among the crowds of people going to their business, and then turned to his own tasks. But something in him gave him hope. Another something appealed all day to his inner nature, and he could not shake off the impression of Mr. Hardy's question—"Are you a Christian?" Even when he went home at night that question pursued him more strenuously than any other, and would not give him peace.

Robert Hardy reached his office just in time to see Burns, the foreman, go out of a side door and cross the yard. The manager followed him and entered the machine shop in time to see him stop at a machine at the farthest end of the shop and speak to the man at work there. The man was a Norwegian, Herman by name. He was running what is called a planer, a machine for trimming pieces of cold metal just from the foundry or the casting room. He was at work this morning on one of the eccentric bars of a locomotive, and it was of such a character that he could leave the machine for several minutes to do the planing. Burns talked with this man for a while and then moved across the floor to another workman, a small-boned, nervous little fellow, who was in charge of a boring machine which

drove a steel drill through heavy plates of iron fastened into the frame.

Mr. Hardy came up just as Burns turned away from this man, and touched him on the shoulder. The foreman started and turned about, surprised to see the manager.

"Well, Burns, how goes everything this morning?" asked Robert.

"The men here are grumbling because they don't have a holiday same as the men in Scoville's department."

"But we can't shut the whole business, can we?" asked Mr. Hardy with a momentary touch of his old time feeling. "The men are unreasonable."

"I'm afraid there 'll be trouble, sir. I can feel it in the air," replied Burns.

Mr. Hardy made no reply in words, but looked about him. Within the blackened area of the great shop about two hundred men were at work. The whirl of machinery was constant. The grind of steel on iron was blended with the rattle of chains and the rolling of the metal carriages in their tracks. The Genius of Railroading seemed present in the grim strength and rapidity of several machines which moved almost as if instinct with intelligence, and played with the most unyielding substances as though they were soft and pliable clay. In the midst of all the smashing of matter against matter, through the smoke and din and dust and revolution of the place, Mr. Hardy was more

than usually alive this morning to the human aspect of the case. His mind easily went back to the time when he himself stood at one of these planers and did just such work as that big Norwegian was doing, only the machines were vastly better and improved now. Mr. Hardy was not ashamed of having risen from the ranks of manual labour. In fact, he always spoke with pride of the work he used to do in that very shop, and he considered himself able to work all by himself any piece of machinery in the shops. But he could not help envying these men this morning. "Why," he said, "probably not one of them but has at least seven weeks to live, and most of them seven months or years, while I—— Why should these men complain because they are not released from toil? Isn't toil sweet when there is a strong body and a loving wife and a happy home? Yes!" he continued to think, "I would give all my wealth if I might change places with any one of these men, and know that I should probably have more than a week to live."

Mr. Hardy walked back to his office, leaving the foreman in a condition of wondering astonishment.

"Something wrong in his works, I guess," muttered Burns.

Mr. Hardy sat down to his desk and wrote an order, releasing all the men who desired to attend Scoville's funeral in the afternoon. He did not have it in his power to do more, and yet he felt that this was the least that he could do under the circum-

stances. The more he thought of Scoville's death the more he felt the cruel injustice of it. The injuries were clearly accidental; but they might have been avoided with proper care for human life. Robert Hardy was just beginning to understand the value of humanity.

He worked hard at the routine of his office until noon. He did what seemed to him the most necessary part of it all with conscientious fidelity. But his mind, a good part of the time, was with the men in the shops. He could not escape the conviction that if a railroad company had the willingness to do so, it could make the surroundings of these men safer and happier without getting poorer work or even losing any money by it.

When noon sounded he went home resolved to do whatever lay in his power to make the men feel that they were regarded as something more than machines.

George was downstairs when his father came in, and looked at him with curiosity rather than with any feeling of shame for the scene of the night before. After lunch was over, Mr. Hardy called his son into the study for a little talk with him before going to the funeral.

"I do not need to tell you, George," began his father quietly but with feeling, "that I felt the disgrace of your drunkenness last night very bitterly. You cannot know the feelings of your father and mother in that respect. But I did not call you in

here to reproach you for your vices. I want to know what you intend to do in the face of the present conditions."

Mr. Hardy paused, then went on again: "I am perfectly aware, George, that you regard my dream as a fancy, and think I am probably out of my mind. Isn't that true?" Mr. Hardy looked George full in the face, and the young man stammered:

"Well—I—ah—yes—I—don't just understand
——"

"At the same time," went on his father, "I realise that nothing but a conviction of reality could produce the change in me which you and all the rest of the family must acknowledge has taken place. And you must confess that I am acting far more rationally than I did before my dream occurred. It is not natural for a father to neglect his own children, and I have done it. It is not rational that he should spend his time and money and strength on himself so as to grow intensely selfish, and I have done that. My son, you may doubt me, but I am firmly convinced that I shall not be alive here after next Sunday. I am trying to live as I ought to live under those conditions. My son," Mr. Hardy spoke with a dignity and a certain impressiveness which George could not but feel, "I want you to do as you know you ought to do under the circumstances. When I am gone your mother and the girls will look to you for advice and direction. You will probably have to leave college for a little while. We will talk that

over this evening. But I want you to promise me that you will not touch another glass of liquor or handle another card as long as you live."

George laughed a little uneasily, and then lied outright: "I don't see the harm of a game once in a while just for fun. I don't play for stakes as some fellows do."

"George," said his father, looking at him steadily, "you have not told the truth. You were gambling only a few nights ago. It is useless for you to deny it. That is where the very liberal allowance I have given you has been squandered."

George turned deathly pale and sat with bowed head, while his father went on almost sternly: "Consider your mother, George, whose heart almost broke when you came in last night. I don't ask you to consider me. I have not been to you what a father ought to be. But if you love your mother and sisters, and have any self-respect left, you will let drink and cards alone after this. In the sight of God, my dear boy, remember what He made you for. You are young. You have all of life before you. You can make a splendid record if God spares your life. I would gladly give all I possess to stand where you do to-day, and live my life over again. I can't do it. The past is irrevocable. But one can always repent. George, believe me, your mother would rather see you in your coffin than see you come home again as you did last night. We love you——"

Mr. Hardy, proud man as he was, could say no

more. He laid his hand on his son's head as if he were a young lad again, and said simply, "Don't disappoint God, my boy," and went out, leaving his son sitting there almost overcome by his father's powerful appeal, but not yet ready to yield himself to the still small voice that spoke within even more powerfully, and whispered to him, "My son, give Me thine heart. Cease to do evil; learn to do well. Cleanse thy ways and follow after righteousness."

It was one o'clock when Mr. Hardy came downstairs, and as he came into the room where Mrs. Hardy and the girls were sitting, he happened to think of some business matters between himself and his only brother, who lived in the next town, twenty miles down the line.

He spoke of the matter to Mrs. Hardy, and she suggested that Will should go down by the three o'clock train with the papers which Mr. Hardy wanted his brother to look over, and come back by the six o'clock in time for dinner.

Clara asked if she couldn't go too, and Bessie added her request, as she had not seen her aunt for some time. Mr. Hardy saw no objection to their going, only he reminded them that he wanted them all back at six. Alice volunteered to amuse George at home while all the rest were gone, and Mr. and Mrs. Hardy departed for the funeral, Mr. Hardy's thoughts still absorbed for the most part with his elder boy. Clara had asked no questions concerning the interview with James, and her father simply

stated that they could have a good talk about it in the evening.

The tenement where the dead man lay was crowded, and in spite of the wintry weather large numbers of men and women stood outside in the snow. Mr. Hardy had ordered his sleigh, and he and his wife had gone down to the house in that, ready to take some one to the cemetery.

The simple service as it began was exceedingly impressive to Mr. Hardy. Most of the neighbours present looked at him and his well-dressed wife in sullen surprise. She noticed the looks with a heightening colour; but Mr. Hardy was too much absorbed in his thought of what he had done and left undone in this family to be influenced by the behaviour of those about him.

Mr. Jones offered a prayer for the comfort of God to rest on the stricken family. He then read a short passage from John's Gospel appropriate to the occasion, and said a few simple words, mostly addressed to the neighbours present. The poor widow had been removed to a small room upstairs, and lay there cared for by the faithful sister. The minister had nearly concluded his remarks when a voice was heard in the room above, followed by alarmed expostulations. Then there was a rapid movement in the narrow hall, and with a scream of frenzy Mrs. Scoville rushed down the stairs and burst into the room where the dead body of her husband lay. She had suddenly awakened out of the fainting stupor in

which she had been lying since her husband's death, and realised what was going on in the house with a quick gathering of passion and strength, such as even the dying sometimes are known to possess. She had escaped from her sister and the neighbour who were watching with her, and crazy with grief flung herself over the coffin, moaning and crying out in such heart-breaking accents that all present were for a moment flung into a state of inaction and awe.

Mrs. Hardy was first to move toward the stricken woman. Where did the wife of the once haughty and proud man learn the touch of sympathy that drew that other poor sister nearer to her, and finally soothed her into quietness? Certain it is that suffering in her own home had marvellously taught the richly dressed woman, the refined, cultured lady, to hold this other one to be of the same household of God with her. So it was that she finally succeeded in drawing her away into the other room, and there held her, gasping for breath, now that the brief strength was spent, and crying feebly, "Oh, God, help me! Don't keep me here in this world any longer!"

If this brief scene thrilled the neighbours with pity, what shall be said of its effect on Robert Hardy? For a moment it seemed to him more than he could bear. He started to his feet and put his hands before his face. Then calming himself by a great effort he sat down, and his face became almost like a stone in its rigidity. When his wife finally

succeeded in getting the woman into the rear room his face relaxed and he breathed more easily; but as soon as possible he arose and went out and stood silent there until the body was brought out and placed in the hearse. Then he went in and spoke a few words to his wife, and told Mr. Jones that he could take four or five to the cemetery if they wished to go. Mrs. Hardy would stay with the suffering widow until he came back. Mr. Hardy also whispered something to his minister, and gave him a large roll of bills to be used for the family. Then he went out again.

That ride in the cold grey of the declining winter afternoon was a bitter experience to Robert. He roused himself at the grave as he heard the words, "Raise us from the death of sin unto the resurrection of righteousness," and something like a gleam of hope shot through his heart at the words. Surely there was mercy with Him who had conquered death for the sake of the human race. He drove back with more peace of soul than he had thought possible. By the time he had reached the shop tenements it was growing dark. He went home with his wife, and thought with something of a feeling of pleasure of the evening before him with his family. The second day had been more agitating in some ways than the first.

He had been unnerved at the funeral, and had felt remorse more keenly than he had once thought possible. As he reviewed the events of the day with

his wife he felt dissatisfied. And yet he had truly tried to do his duty in the light of eternity. What more could he do?

He felt anxious about George, and told his wife of the conversation he had with him. Mrs. Hardy felt the same anxiety as her husband. After the horses were put up and the father and mother had gone into the house they continued the conversation. Alice was upstairs with George, and the other children had not come back. It was dark, but husband and wife sat by the light of the open fire and talked together until nearly six o'clock. Mr. Hardy had just said something about Clara, and Mrs. Hardy replied, "Isn't it about time they were here?" when the telephone bell rang in the little office adjoining the hall, connected by wire with the shops, where Mr. Hardy attended to some of the business of the company. He went in and answered the call, and a series of sharp exclamations and questions was soon followed by his coming back into the room where his wife sat. By the light of the open fire she could see that he was very pale. His overcoat was lying on the couch where he had thrown it as he came in. He hastily put it on, and then said to his wife :

"Mary, there has been an accident to the six o'clock train between Baldwin and here, and Burns has telephoned me to come down. Don't be alarmed. We will hope for the best."

.. Mrs. Hardy started up.

"Why, Will and Bess and Clara were coming home by that train!"

"Mary, let us hope for the best." Mr. Hardy's voice trembled, but he tried to speak calmly and in comfort.

"What did Mr. Burns telephone? Tell me all, Robert. I can bear it with you."

"He telephoned that the train was derailed and a dozen people killed and as many injured. I must go down the line at once! Oh, God, spare our dear ones!"

Mr. Hardy was almost overwhelmed by this last stroke, yet he asked himself how many accidents had occurred this last year on the railway without his giving much thought to the suffering of those families afflicted! Now perhaps it had come to him. Bidding his wife pray and hope, he rushed out of the house and down to the station with the energy and rapidity of the youth who in college days had taken prizes for athletic superiority.

At the station he found a special train just ready to go to the scene of the accident. He mounted the engine with a feeling that it was a little nearer the fatal spot and would reach there first. At the last minute no more definite news concerning the particular persons killed and injured had been received.

Mr. Hardy felt almost glad of the uncertainty as the engine pulled out and started on its run of fifteen miles, soon attaining a speed of fifty-five miles an

hour. The snow was falling in large, moist flakes. It was growing warmer and would rain before morning. He gazed at the narrow band of light on the track ahead, and leaned forward as if to help the engine go faster. He did not speak, while the train rushed through the night.

So the second of Robert Hardy's seven days drew to a close.

WEDNESDAY—THE THIRD DAY.

AS the engine drew near the scene of the wreck a great crowd could be seen standing about the track. Before the train came to a stop Robert Hardy leaped down from the cab and struggled forward, uttering cries of which he himself probably was not conscious. The accident had occurred upon a bridge which spanned a river in the vicinity of Baldwin, near which town Mr. Hardy's brother lived.

The engine, mail car, two coaches, and two sleeping-cars had crashed through, and falling a distance of fifty feet had partly broken through the ice of the frozen stream. To add to the horror of the disaster, the two sleeping-cars had caught fire, and there was absolutely no means to fight the flames. Mr. Hardy caught confused glimpses of men down on the ice throwing handfuls of snow upon the blazing timbers in a frantic attempt to drive back or put out the flames. He fell, rather than scrambled, down the steep, slippery bank of the stream, and then the full horror of the situation burst upon him.

The baggage car and tender had fallen in such a way that the trucks rested upright on the ice, and the position of the timbers was relatively that of the train

before it had left the track. One coach lay upon its side, but had broken completely in two, as though some giant hand had pulled it apart, leaving the ragged ends of timber projecting toward one another in such curious fashion that if the two ends of the car had been pushed together the splintered beams would have fitted into place almost as though made on a pattern. The other coach had fallen upon one end, and one third of it was under water. The other end, resting partly against the broken car, stuck up in the air like some curious, fantastic pillar or leaning tower.

Mr. Hardy was conscious of all this and more as he heard the groans of the injured and the cries of those begging to be released from the timbers under which they had been caught. But his own children! Never had he loved them as now.

The crowd of people had increased to a mob. The confusion was that of terror. Mr. Hardy rushed about the wreck searching for his children, a great throbbing at his heart as he thought of their probable fate, when the sweetest of all sounds, Bessie's dear voice, came to him, and the next minute he had caught up the child as she ran to him and strained her to his breast as in the old days when he had carried her about the house and garden.

"Where are Will and Clara?"

"Oh, father, they're here! and Will wasn't hurt much more than I was; but Clara has fainted, and she is lying down over here."

Bess dragged her father out across the ice to the

edge of the bank, where a number of the victims had been laid on the cushions of the seats, some dead, some dying. There lay Clara, very white and still, with Will bending over her, himself bleeding from several wounds about the head and hands, but still conscious and trying to restore his sister.

Mr. Hardy kneeled down in the snow by his son's side. Will was not surprised at seeing him there ; but he sobbed excitedly : " Oh, she is dead."

" No," replied her father ; " she is not."

Clara stirred, and her lips moved ; but she did not open her eyes, and then her father noticed that a strange mark lay over her face.

How Mr. Hardy succeeded in carrying the girl to the top of the bank, and how he left her there in the care of brave-hearted women while he went down to rescue victims imprisoned and groaning for help ; how Bess related the accident of the night and tried to explain how she was not hurt except a scratch or two, because she fell between two car-seat cushions that were jammed around her and protected her from injury ; how the excitement grew as it was discovered that the dead and dying would number more than seventy-five, instead of ten or twelve, as Burns had said ; how finally Robert Hardy and Will and Bess and Clara, with other victims, were taken back to Barton, where a great crowd of anxious, pale-faced people was surging through the station and over the track ; how James Caxton was first to board the train down by the shops, at the risk of his neck ; how Mrs.

Hardy met her children and husband ; how there was sorrow in many a home in Barton that night and for many days to come ; how Mr. Hardy, a little after midnight, entirely exhausted by the events of the day and night, finally fell asleep and dreamed the scene all over again,—all this and a great deal more might be of interest concerning one of the most remarkable railroad accidents that ever occurred in the country, but it would be out of place in this narrative. For it is all true, exactly and literally, only the detailed horrors of it no pen can describe, no words can tell.

Mr. Hardy woke about eight o'clock, rested, but feeling very lame and sore from his exertions of the night. His first thought was of Clara. When he went to sleep the girl seemed to be resting without pain, but that strange mark across her face made them all anxious. It was not a bruise, but it lay like a brand across the eyes, which had not opened since her father found her lying by the frozen stream.

James had insisted on staying in the house to be of service, and Mrs. Hardy had felt grateful for his presence as she watched for returning consciousness from Clara, who still gave no more sign of animation, although she breathed easily and seemed to be free from pain. Every doctor and surgeon in town had been summoned to the scene of the accident. But Mr. Hardy felt so anxious for Clara as he came in and looked at her that he went downstairs and asked James if he would run out and see if any of the doctors had returned.

"Yes, sir ; I'll go at once. How is she now, Mr. Hardy ?" James looked him in the face with the look that love wears when it is true and brave.

"My boy," replied Mr. Hardy, laying his hand on James's shoulder, "I don't know. There is something strange about it. Get a doctor, if you can. But I know there must be many other sad homes to-day in Barton. Oh, it was horrible !"

He sat down and covered his face, while James with a brief "God help us, sir !" went out in search of a doctor.

Mr. Hardy went upstairs again, and with his wife kneeled down and offered a prayer of thanksgiving and of appeal. "O Lord," said Robert, "grant that this dear one of ours may be restored to us again. Spare us this anguish, not in return for our goodness, but out of Thy great compassion for our sins repented of !"

Will and Bess lay in the next room, and now that the reaction had set in they were sleeping, Will feverish and restless, Bess quite peaceful, as if nothing had happened out of the usual order of things.

"Where is George ?" asked Mr. Hardy as he rose from his prayer.

"I don't know, Robert. He started down to the train a little while after you did. Haven't you seen him ?"

"No, Mary. God grant he may not——" Mr. Hardy did not dare finish his thought aloud.

His wife guessed it, and together the two sat hand

in hand, drawn very near by their mutual trouble and by all the strange events of that strange week ; and together they talked of the accident and of Clara and James and their eldest son ; and then Mrs. Hardy said, as she tremblingly drew her husband's face near to her :

"Robert, have you still that impression concerning the time left you here to live ? Do you still think this week is to be the end ?"

Mrs. Hardy had a vague hope that the shock of the accident might have destroyed the impression of the dream ; but her hope was disappointed.

"My dear wife," replied Robert, "there is not the least doubt in my mind that my dream was a vision of what will happen. There is no question but that after Sunday I shall not be with you. This is Wednesday. How lightning-like the days have flown ! How precious the moments are ! How many of them I have wasted in foolish selfishness ! Mary, I should go mad with the thought if I did not feel the necessity of making this week the best week of all my life ; only, I do not know what is most important to do. If it had been seven months, or even seven weeks, I might have planned more wisely. Oh, it is cruelly brief, the time ! But I must make the wisest possible use of it. This accident, so unexpected, has complicated the matter. I had not reckoned on it."

How many of us do reckon on accidents ? They always come into our lives with a shock. Yet it

seems possible that a man who lives very close to God every day might be so ready for everything that not even the most terrible catastrophe could make much difference to his plans for daily life, least of all deprive him of his reason, as it has so often done. Robert Hardy was just beginning to realise dimly that life is not one thing, but many things, and that its importance is the importance which belongs to the character of God Himself.

He began to talk calmly with his wife concerning what he would do that day, and was still talking about it when James came in with a doctor, who at once went upstairs. He was just from the scene of the accident, and bore marks of a hard night's work. His first glance at Clara was hard and professional. But as he looked he grew very grave, and an expression of serious surprise came over his weary face. He laid his hands on the girl's eyes and examined them; raised her hand and dropped it upon the bed again. Then turning to the father and mother he said gently :

"You must prepare yourselves for a terrible fact resulting from the accident to your daughter. She has suffered a shock that will probably render her blind as long as she lives."

Mr. and Mrs. Hardy listened, pale-faced and troubled. It was hard to think of the girl, so strong-willed, so passionate, and yet so capable of noble impulses and loving desires, as all her life shut up within the darkness thus. It was bitter to

think of this for her. What would it be to *her* when she awoke to the whole consciousness of it?

The doctor spoke again slowly: "There is another thing you ought to be prepared for. In rare cases like this, it happens sometimes that loss of hearing accompanies the loss of sight." Then after a pause, "And with the loss of sight and hearing it is possible the peculiar shock has deprived your daughter of the power of speech. I do not know yet whether this has happened, but I prepare you for the worst."

"Blind and deaf and dumb!" murmured Mr. Hardy, while his wife sat down and buried her face in the bedclothes and sobbed. It seemed terrible to them.

The doctor, after a little further examination, said that nothing more could be done at present. He gave directions for certain necessary treatment, and departed after giving a look at Will and Bess and prescribing for them.

Mr. Hardy went downstairs and quietly told James all that the doctor had said. To a man living on the verge of eternity, as Mr. Hardy was, there was no time for evasions or the postponing of bad news or the utterance of soft speeches.

James took the news more calmly than Mr. Hardy thought he would. It was evident he did not realise all that was meant by it.

"Can you love Clara under these conditions?" asked Mr. Hardy, looking at James with a sympathy that the young man could not help feeling.

"Yes, sir ; more than ever. Why, is she not more in need of it than ever ?"

"True ; but what can you do with a helpless creature like that ?"

"God help us, sir ! If she were my wife now and were dependent on me, don't you think I could care for her more tenderly than any one else in the world ?"

Mr. Hardy shook his head. "This is a hard blow to me, James. I don't know just what to say yet. But it is possible the poor girl may not have to suffer all that. Let us hope the doctor is not justified in his supposition. Indeed, he said he could not tell for certain that loss of hearing and speech would follow. If they do, I cannot see how Clara can retain her reason when she recovers from the shock. James, I believe you are a good fellow. I have not forgotten my own courtship. I will not stand in the way between you and your love for Clara in anything right and reasonable. I had hoped we might have a good talk together over the matter. This accident has made it impossible for a time, at least ; but I confide in you as an honest, true man. We must wait for events to take shape. Meanwhile, let us pray God to give us wisdom and lead us into the way we need to go."

James Caxton listened to Mr. Hardy with a feeling of astonishment. This was not the Robert Hardy he had known all his life ; this was a new man. For a moment his own hopes and fears were

almost lost sight of in the thought of the great change in the elder man. In a tumult of feeling he went home, after begging Mrs. Hardy to send him word if Clara became worse or if there were any service he could render the family.

Robert went back upstairs where his wife sat by the side of the injured girl.

"Mary," he said, "I must go down to the shops. You know I left word with Wellman to do what he could in the office until I could get down; but this accident has made it imperative that I be there myself. There are details the men cannot attend to. I cannot do any more here, and I must do what I can for the sufferers. God has been merciful to us, dear. Our dear ones are spared to us. Oh, when I heard Bessie's voice it seemed to me that God was taking pity on me for the burden I am carrying this week! If she had been killed, I do believe I should have gone mad. Pray for me, sweetheart!"

With a kiss and embrace Robert left the house; and even in the sorrow of all her trouble Mrs. Hardy felt a great wave of joy flow through her at the thought of a love come back to her. As she went to the window and watched the tall, strong figure swing down the street, she almost felt a girl again, and wondered if he would turn round and see her there and lift his hat to her as in the old days. Yes; just before he reached the corner where he had to turn, he looked back up at the window, saw his wife standing there, and took off his hat with a smile, and she

waved her hand at him and coloured as when her Robert used to do the same thing while he was courting her.

“Two fools!” somebody says. Yes; two children of God, who have seen His face and learned what all this life means.

Mr. Hardy found much to do at the shops. The accident necessitated special work. It looked to him as if he must be down there all day. There was almost a panic in the planing rooms. The air was heavy with the horror of the night before. Owing to the wreck, there was more need of work in the shops than ever; but towards noon Burns came into the office, pulling a long face, and asking Mr. Hardy to step across the yard and talk to the men, who had threatened, Burns said, to do mischief if they were not given the afternoon to go down to the scene of the disaster. Mr. Hardy rose with a sinking heart and followed Burns into the planing rooms. He told the foreman to get the men together in the centre of the room. They stopped their machines and gathered in the largest open space between the planers, and Mr. Hardy addressed them:

“What do you want? Burns tells me there is dissatisfaction. Speak out so that we may know what the trouble is.”

There was an awkward pause. Then one man spoke up:

“We think the company ought to give us the day off.”

"What for?" asked Mr. Hardy mildly.

Under any other circumstances he would have told the men they might leave for good if they didn't like the pay and the company. He had done just that thing twice before; but things were different now. He looked at the men in a new light. He was a new man himself. Besides, it was imperative that the work in the shops should go on. The company could ill afford to lose the work just at this particular time. All these considerations did not blind Robert to his obligations as an officer of the company. He was only anxious that no injustice should be done, so he said, "What for?" mildly and quietly, and waited for an answer.

The spokesman was not quite ready with an answer. The directness of the question and the mildness of it also surprised him. Another man spoke up:

"Our friends was in the accident. We want to go and see them."

"Very well. How many men had relatives or friends in the accident who are injured or killed? Let them step forward."

There was a moment of inaction. Then three men stepped out. Mr. Hardy said: "You may go if you want to. Why didn't you ask for leave if you wanted it? What reason have you to suppose the company would refuse such a request? Now, what is the trouble with the rest? The company is not in a position to grant a holiday at this particular

time, and you know it. Come, be fair, men ! I can't shut the shops all day to let you go and see a railroad wreck. Be reasonable ! What do you want ? ”

“ We want more pay and freedom from Sunday work,” said a big fellow, the Norwegian who worked the biggest planer in the shop. He had more than once proved troublesome to Burns, but he was a remarkably intelligent and skilful workman, and the foreman had endured much irritation on that account.

Mr. Hardy replied, still speaking pleasantly : “ The matter of more pay is one we cannot well discuss here now, but I will say to you and all the rest that as far as it is in my power there shall be no more Sunday work demanded ”—“ while I live,” Mr. Hardy was on the point of saying ; but he said instead, “ of the men in the shops.”

“ Still, that is not the question,” replied the man in an insolent tone. Mr. Hardy looked at him more closely and saw that he had been drinking. Several of the workmen cried out :

“ Shut up, Herman ! Mr. Hardy be right ; we be fools to make row now at this time.”

A dozen men started for their machines to go to work again, while Burns went up and laid his hand on the Norwegian's arm and said to him roughly :

“ Just stop it, now ! You've been dipping that beard of yours into a whisky barrel. Better mind your pegs, or you'll get your walking papers.”

“ Mind your own, Burns,” replied the big man

heavily. "You be somethings of a beard drinker yourself, if you had the beard."

Burns was so enraged at the drunken retort that he drew back as if to strike the man, when the Norwegian smote the foreman a blow that laid him sprawling in the iron dust. Instantly Mr. Hardy stepped up between the two men before Burns could rise. We have spoken of Robert's intense horror of the coarse, physical vices. It seemed totally wrong to him that a workman should degrade himself with drink. Besides, he could not tolerate such actions in the shops. He looked the drunken man in the face and said sternly :

"You are discharged ! I cannot afford to employ drunken men in these shops. You may go this instant !"

The man leered at Mr. Hardy, raised his arm as though to strike, while the manager confronted him with a stern look ; but before the Norwegian could do any harm, two or three of the men seized him and hustled him back to the other end of the shops, while Burns rose, vowing vengeance.

The men went back to their machines, and Mr. Hardy, with an anxious heart, went back into the office, satisfied that there would be no trouble at the shops for the rest of that day at least. He was sorry that he had been obliged to discharge Herman, but he felt that he had done the right thing. The company could not afford to employ in any way men who were drunkards, especially just at this time,

when it began to be more than plainly hinted that the result of the accident on the line was due to the partial intoxication of a line inspector.

That accident was a complication in Robert Hardy's Seven Days. It was demanding of him precious time that he longed to spend in his family. At one time in the afternoon as he worked at the office he was tempted to resign his position and go home, come what might. But, to his credit be it said, that always, even in his most selfish moments, he had been faithful to his duties at the office. At present no one could fully take his place. He felt that his duty to the company and to the public demanded his services at a critical time in railroad matters. So he stayed and worked on, praying as he worked for his dear ones, and hoping, as no bad news came from home, that Clara was better. He had been to the telephone several times and had two or three short talks with his wife ; and now just as the lights were turned on in the office the bell rang again, and Mrs. Hardy told him that the minister, Mr. Jones, had called and wanted to see him about some of the families that were injured in the accident at the foundry room.

"Tell Mr. Jones I will try to see him at the meeting to-night." (In Barton the church meeting was held on Wednesday.) "And tell him I will have something to give him for what he wants. How is Clara now?"

"No change yet. Will is suffering somewhat

from nervousness. He says he had a horrible dream of the accident this afternoon. Bess is about the same. Her escape was a miracle."

"Has George come home yet?"

"No; I am getting anxious about him. I wish you would inquire about him at the Bramleys' as you come up to dinner."

"I will. I must leave very soon. This has been a terrible day down here. God keeps us. Good-bye."

Robert finished most of the work, toiling as never in all his life before, and started for home at six. On the way he made inquiries concerning George, but nobody had seen him since the evening before. When he reached the house he found that his wife, utterly worn out, had lain down for a little sleep. Alice was caring for the patients with a calm courage and quiet cheerfulness that revealed the girl's strong, self-reliant character. Clara's condition had not changed. She still lay as if sleeping. Alice reported that once in the afternoon she had moved her lips and distinctly called for water. Mr. Hardy and Bess sat down to the supper table by themselves, and Bess again told how she had been saved from even a scratch in that terrible fall. It was indeed remarkable that the child did not suffer even from the general shock and reaction of the disaster.

After a brief meal Mr. Hardy went upstairs to Clara again. His chief anxiety now was for her. He believed that if the doctor's fears were realised, she would become insane. It was hardly possible

that a person of her temperament and passion could be otherwise in case she should come to consciousness of her condition.

As the evening wore on, Mr. Hardy felt that his duty lay in his own home for that night, and he would have to see his minister some other time. He thought of the prayer meeting with regret, and sat by the bed of the unconscious girl, wondering how it was possible that for all these years gone by he had been so indifferent to one of the best and most precious opportunities for growing in spiritual manhood. He heard the bell ring for service, and when it stopped he sat with his face in his hands praying.

The prayer meeting in Mr. Jones' church was generally a very quiet affair. A good many people in the church, especially those who came to the meeting only occasionally, thought it was stupid. But it was a noticeable fact that those who attended regularly were the ones who did the most work in the church, and the ones who grew stronger and sweeter in the Christian life. There was usually no regular subject given out. There was very little talking done. From beginning to close it was nearly all prayer. Mr. Jones did not feel afraid of the long pauses. He believed modern American life to be so full of nervousness and hurry that it would not hurt any one to sit still and think a minute or two. That was the reason so many people called Mr. Jones' prayer meetings dull; because they were not rushing

all the time with sensational or exciting remarks and incidents. Mr. Jones didn't believe that sensation was what a prayer meeting was for, and he planned accordingly. But this particular evening was an exception. The great railroad accident so near them had stirred the entire community to the depths of its sympathy. Several families in Mr. Jones' church had been sufferers. As if by tacit consent, there was an unusually large gathering at the church, and the subject was of necessity the recent disaster. It was a spontaneous meeting. The minister briefly opened with the expressed desire that God would bless the suffering, prepare the dying, and comfort the living, and almost instantly a service of prayer began which was like a flood in its continuous outpouring. The people seemed urged by some irresistible feeling to relieve the pent-up strain of the day in prayer; and such prayers had not been heard in that church for many years.

It was during the first pause that occurred that James Caxton opened the door and gave a note to some one in the back seat, with a request that it be sent up to Mr. Jones. He then turned as if to go out, but hesitated, came back, and slipped into a vacant seat. Mr. Jones received the note, glanced at its contents, and then rose. There was a singular emotion in his voice as he spoke.

"I have just been handed a note from one of our members, Mr. Robert Hardy, with the request that I read it aloud to the church to-night:

*"To you, my dear pastor, and you, my brothers and sisters in Christ :—*I suppose it is known to most of you that three of my children were in the train during the recent accident and two of them escaped with but slight injuries. But my daughter Clara was seriously injured by the shock, and I am at this moment seated by her side, praying that her reason may be spared and her possible injuries prove to be within the region of cure. I had planned to be with you to-night. I wanted to tell the church of the change that I have lately experienced. I do not need to tell you that for the twenty-five years that I have been a member of the church I have been a member only in name. I have seldom appeared in any of the spiritual or devotional services of the church. I have often sat in an attitude of criticism to the best preaching. I have been a hard man with those in my employ. I have been cold and even revengeful toward other members of this church. I have been a very proud, unchristian, selfish man. In the sight of God I have been an altogether unworthy member of the Church of Christ. I do not take any pride to myself in making this confession, but I feel that it is due to you, and something tells me I shall have more peace of mind if I speak to you as I have lately prayed to God.

"It is not necessary, neither have I time nor strength, to tell you how I have been brought to see my selfishness in all its enormity. It is enough if I say to you that I most sincerely believe that I

have misunderstood very largely the right meaning of human existence. I want to pray with you and for you. You will let me say this also, bearing with me, as this may be my last opportunity to say to you what lies in my heart : Serve the Church of Christ, all you who have taken upon you its vows, with enthusiasm and loyalty. Stand by the superintendent of the Sunday-school ; attend this week-night service when you can, making it the most important service of the week ; and, more than all, live true, simple, loving Christian lives every day.

It may seem strange that I am preaching like this to you who have probably done your duty far better than I ever did, but I wish to say what lies deep in my heart to-night. If there are any young men in the meeting to-night, I want to say to them, Become Christians to the core—not in name simply as I have been ; and above all, kneel down every morning, noon, and night, and pray to God to keep you from a selfish life—such a life as I have lived—forgetful of church vows, of the rights of the working poor, of the brother and sister in Christ. Yes ; I would be willing that any young man might say, ‘O Lord, keep me from living as selfish and useless and proud a life as Robert Hardy once lived.’ For that is the truth. No one but God knows how I have suffered at the thought of the past ; how I am suffering at the present moment. I pray that any who are afflicted at this present time may find peace in Him who bore the world’s sorrows in His great

heart of love. If it were not for my faith in my Saviour at this time, I should be in despair. As it is, I am suffering, but it is not the suffering which follows an eclipse of hope. I believe in the eternal life and in the forgiveness of sins, yea, even such sins as mine have been. Forgive so much about myself; it is necessary under the circumstances. I ask your prayers for me as your petitions go up for the afflicted and repentant everywhere.

“Your brother in Christ,

“ROBERT HARDY.”

The impression made by the reading of this letter was profound. The stillness that followed was death-like. Then one of the oldest men in the room rose, and in a prayer of great power prayed for the absent man and thanked God for His guiding strength. The prayer was followed by others, and then one and another of the members, who had not been on really good terms with Mr. Hardy, arose and confessed and asked forgiveness. The hearts of the people were greatly moved. Mr. Jones, contrary to his usual habit, asked, as the meeting drew to a close, if there were any present who wanted to begin that Christian life at the core, of which Mr. Hardy spoke.

“I see a number here not professing Christians. Are there any who would like to say that they want to become Christians, and will try to live the Christ-life every day?”

In the pause that followed, James Caxton, who

had been sitting in the back seat, felt as though some power within and without him were forcing him to his feet. He grasped his chair as if to hold himself down; but the Holy Spirit whispered to him, "Son, this will be the beginning of a new life to thee."

So James Caxton arose and said he wanted to be a Christian; and from that moment he dated his strong, consecrated life—a life that bids fair to become famous in the world some day. His action was the beginning of a new life in that Church and community; but we cannot dwell on that in the course of this history. O Robert Hardy! the good God is blessing thee in this thy week of trial! For was it not thy word that first started this young manly soul to consider what he owed to Jesus the Christ?

To come back to Robert. He had written the note, beginning it just a little after the bell ceased ringing, and as he finished, James had come over to see if he could be of any service. The church was near by, and Mr. Hardy asked him to take the note over. He went over to the church, with the result described. He did not come back at once, and Mr. Hardy watched on with Alice. Will slept irregularly, being troubled with his dreams of the accident. Mrs. Hardy awoke and begged her husband to lie down and get a little rest. He did so, but was aroused about ten o'clock by the doctor coming in. He had just finished a visit near by; he

saw the light and was anxious, as the case was an extraordinary one, to see Clara. He examined her face very keenly, and then sat down by the bed for an instant. After giving certain medicines he found that he was in need of another article, which was at his house.

"I will go and get it, doctor. It's not far, and I think a little fresh air will do me good and help me to remain awake better," said Robert.

He went downstairs, and the doctor followed him as he went out into the hall and flung on his overcoat. Mr. Hardy turned before he opened the door:

"Doctor, tell me the truth about my girl. What is her condition?"

"It is serious; but more than that I cannot say. There is a possibility that by means of a slight operation the disastrous consequences of the shock to her eyes may be averted; and it is possible that the other results of which I hinted may not be realised. It is not in medical power to decide with certainty."

So Mr. Hardy went out into the night with a glimmer of hope in his breast. It was snowing again and a strong wind was blowing, so he buttoned his big coat close up, drew his hat down over his brows, and leaning forward, walked as rapidly as he could against the wind in the direction of the doctor's house. The streets were almost deserted. The lights at the corners flickered and showed pale

through the lamps. As he turned down a narrow street, intending to make a short cut across a park that lay near the doctor's, he was suddenly seized by three or four young men, and one of them said in a tone which betrayed a drunken debauch :

"Hold up your hands and deliver! You've got plenty of chink and we haven't! So no squalling, or we'll shoot you for it."

Mr. Hardy was taken completely by surprise. But he was a vigorous, athletic man, and his first impulse was to shake himself loose, to knock down two of his assailants next to him and make a run for it. His next glance, however, showed him the nature of the group of young men. They were not professional robbers, but young men about town who had been drinking late and were evidently out on a lark, and were acting in this way just for fun. Mr. Hardy guessed exactly right. What could he do? Two of the young men were known to him, the sons of the Bramleys, who were well-to-do people in Barton. Mr. Hardy's next impulse was to discover himself to them and beg them to quit such dangerous fooling and go home. The three other young men were in shadow, and he could not recognise them. All this passed through his thought like a flash. But before he had time to do anything, a police officer sprang out of a doorway near by, and the group of young men, dropping their hold of Mr. Hardy, fled in different directions. The officer made pursuit, and after a short run captured one of the young men,

whom after vigorous resistance he dragged back to where Mr. Hardy stood, exclaiming,—

“Here’s one of the rascals, sir! I heard ’em when they stopped you. We’ve been looking for this gang some time now. Just identify this one, if he is the one that just now grabbed ye, sir.”

Under the light of the lamp the policeman dragged the form of his victim and roughly struck up his hat. At that instant Mr. Hardy looked into his face and cried out :

“George! Is it you?”

And the son replied as he started back :

“Father!”

The two looked at each other in silence, while the snow fell in whirling flakes about them.

And this was the end of Robert Hardy’s third day.

THURSDAY—THE FOURTH DAY.

M R. HARDY looked at his son sternly, standing at the little distance to which he had recoiled after his first recognition of the lad. It would be difficult to describe his emotions. He had never been an affectionate father to his boys. He had generally given them money when they asked for it, but had not questioned them about its use. He was not familiar with his elder son's habits, and only within the last few days had he known that he was what the age popularly designates as "fast." He had never made a companion of his son; he had not grown up with him; so that now as he faced him under the strange circumstances that had brought them together he was actually at a loss to know what to do or say. The thought that his son was guilty of a crime which might put him behind prison bars did not yet occur to his mind. He was only conscious of a great longing to get back home and have a thorough talk with his boy, in the hope of winning him to better things. But he must say something to George.

The police officer stared in wonder after the first startled cry of "Father!" on the part of the young

man, but he did not loosen his hold on him. He took an extra twist in the coat collar of his captive, and looked sharply at Mr. Hardy, as much as to say : "He may be your son, but he's my victim, and I mean to keep a good clutch on him."

George was the first to speak :

"Father, you know I wouldn't do such a thing really. We were only out for a little fun. We didn't know you, of course. We didn't mean any real harm; we were only fooling."

"It was dangerous fooling," replied his father. He still stood apart from the boy and spoke quietly, but his face was pale and his heart was wrung with torture for his firstborn. Ah, how careless of him he had been! How little companionship the two had had! How very little help the boy had received from the man! Now, believing that only four more days lay before him to use to the glory of God, Robert Hardy felt the sting of that bitterest of all bitter feelings, useless regret—the regret that does not carry with it any hope of redeeming a selfish past.

After his father had spoken, George sullenly remained silent. Mr. Hardy bowed his head and seemed thinking. The officer, who had been waiting for another move on the part of the elder man, said :

"Well, we must be moving on. It's warmer in the lock-up than out here; so come along, young fellow, and do your talking to-morrow morning with the rest of the drunks and disorderlies."

"Stop!" cried Robert Hardy. "This is my son! Do you understand? What are you going to do?"

"Well, governor, that's a pretty question at this time o' day. Do? I'm going to take him for assault with intent to commit highway robbery."

"But you heard him say it was all a joke."

"A pretty joke to stop a man on the highway and demand his money! Oh, no! That's carrying a joke too far. I'm bound to obey orders. We've been after this gang of young chaps for a month now."

"But, officer, you don't understand: this is my son!"

"Well, what of that? Don't we charge sons every day for some devilry or other? Do you suppose you are the only father whose son is going to the devil?"

"Oh, no!" cried Mr. Hardy with sudden passion. "But this is my elder boy. It would kill his mother to have him arrested and put in jail for trying to rob his own father. Yet he was once innocent—— What am I saying? He might be now if I had done my duty."

Mr. Hardy confronted the officer with a certain sorrowful dignity which even that hardened defender of the law understood.

"Officer, let the boy go. I will answer for it if any blame falls on you. He was not at fault in this matter. He was not the one who assaulted me. He did not touch me. You could not get a particle

of testimony against him. And besides that, it is necessary that he return with me. This is a case for the law of God; it belongs to a higher than a human court."

The officer hesitated; Mr. Hardy stepped nearer his son.

"George," he said, as if forgetting for a moment that the officer was present, "did you know that Clara and Bess and Will were in the accident last night?"

George turned pale and tremblingly replied, "No, father. Were they hurt? Was Bess——" The boy seemed moved as his father had not yet seen him.

"No, they were not; that is, Bess was not hurt at all. But Will was severely bruised, and Clara still lies in a state of stupor or unconsciousness and we do not know what the end will be. I was on my way just now to get some needed articles from the doctor's house. You must come back with me; the law has no hold on you."

"Maybe the law hasn't any hold on him, but Michael Finnerty has. I don't just like the idea, mister, of letting him go," replied the stubborn and unusually dutiful officer.

Mr. Hardy began to appeal to the man's love of his own children. It did not seem to move him in the least, until he mentioned the fact that it was cruelty to keep the suffering girl at home waiting for her father's return.

Mr. Finnerty finally loosened his hold on George and said slowly and painfully, "An' if I lose me job

I'll be knowin' who was to blame for it. I always told Michael Finnerty that he was too soft-hearted to go in the force!"

"You won't suffer, officer. Many thanks! Come, George."

Father and son moved off together, while the defender of the law stood irresolute, watching them disappear through the storm and muttering to himself, "I'm a soft-hearted fool. I ought to 'a' been born a female hospital nurse, I had."

During that walk home, after Mr. Hardy had gone round by the doctor's with George, not a word was exchanged. The storm was increasing. The two walked along in silence; but when George walked into the hall at home he turned and saw a look on his father's face that smote him to the heart, for he was not yet a hardened soul. Mr. Hardy had lived years in that experience. No one could tell how his heart had been tortured by what he had endured that night; but the mark of it was stamped indelibly on his face, and he knew that he would bear it to his grave.

Mrs. Hardy came running downstairs as the two came in. When George turned and faced her she held out her arms, crying, "My boy! my boy! We have been so anxious about you!"

What! not one word of reproach, of rebuke, of question as to what he had been doing all this time that the family had been suffering! No; not one word. Ah, mother love! It is the most wonderful

thing on earth, next to the love of God for the sinner. It is even that, for it is the love of God expressing itself through the mother, who is the temple of the loving God.

George dashed away a tear ; then going up to his mother he laid his cheek against hers, while she folded her arms round him and cried a little and asked no questions. After a moment's silence he stammered out a few words of sorrow at having caused her pain. She joyfully accepted his broken explanation of how he had not known of the accident to Clara and the others. It was true that he had gone out the evening before, fully intending to go down to the scene of the accident ; but coming across some of his old companions he had gone off with them, and spent the night in a disgraceful carouse. Throughout the day he had been more or less under the influence of liquor, dimly conscious that a great disaster had happened down the line, but not sober enough to realise its details or its possible connection with those of his own home.

The sudden meeting with his father had started him out of the drowsy intoxication which he had fallen into as the day progressed. Now as he felt his mother's arms round him, and realised a little what the family had been called upon to endure, he felt the shame and disgrace of his own conduct.

Mr. Hardy went upstairs and consulted with the doctor, who wondered at his protracted absence. There was no change in Clara yet. She lay in a

condition which could not be called a trance or a sleep. She did not seem to be in any great pain; but she was unconscious of all outside conditions.

After a little talk with his mother, George came up and inquired after Bess and Will. They were both sleeping, and after the doctor had gone out the father and mother and son sat down together in the room where Clara lay.

Mr. Hardy did not say a word to George about the incident of the evening. The shame of it was too great yet. When men of Mr. Hardy's self-contained, repressed, proud nature are pained, it is with an intense inward fire of passion that cannot bear to break out into words.

George had sense enough to offer to relieve his parents of the burden of watching through the night, and during the exchange of watchers towards morning, as Mrs. Hardy slipped into the room to relieve him, she found him kneeling down at a couch with his face buried in the cushions. She raised her face in thanksgiving to God and went softly out.

The morning dawned grey with snow, which still whirled in wreaths about the sorrowing homes of Barton; but Robert Hardy thought of the merciful covering it would make for the ghastly piles of ruin down under the bridge and along the banks of the river. He said to himself, "This is my fourth day; how can I best spend it? What shall I do?" He kneeled and prayed, and rose somewhat refreshed.

The forenoon went rapidly by, and before he knew it noon was near. The time had passed in watching Clara, visiting with Bess and Will, and doing some necessary work for the company in his little office downstairs. He did not feel like saying anything to George yet. James Caxton had been in, and the first thing he had mentioned had been his own act in the meeting the night before. Mr. Hardy thanked God for it, and a prayer went out of his heart for his own son, that the Spirit might touch him in his sin and bring him into the light of Christ.

A little after noon the storm cleared up, and Robert prepared to go down to the shops. Clara had not yet come out of her stupor. The doctor had called and done what he could. There was nothing in particular that Mr. Hardy could do in the case, so he went out about one o'clock and entered his office, hoping as he went in that he would have no trouble with the men.

Mr. Burns reported everything quiet, and the manager with a sigh of relief proceeded with the routine duties of the business. Nothing of any special interest occurred through the afternoon. The storm had ceased entirely and the sun had come out clear and warm. People were clearing off the walks, and the ringing of sleigh bells was distinct in the office, even above the incessant hum of the big engine.

Towards three o'clock one of Mr. Hardy's old friends, an officer of the line, came in and said there

was a general movement on foot throughout Barton to hold a monster mass meeting in the town hall for the benefit of the sufferers, both in the railroad accident and in the explosion of the Sunday before in the shops. It was true the company would settle for damages, but in many cases the adjustment of claims would not be made until much suffering and hardship had been endured. There was a common feeling on the part of the townspeople that a meeting for public conference would result in much good, and there was also, as has been the case in other large horrors, a craving to relieve the strain of feeling by public gathering and consultation.

"Can you come to the meeting, Hardy?" asked his friend.

Mr. Hardy thought a minute and replied, "Yes; I think I can." Already an idea had taken shape in his mind which he could not help feeling was inspired by God.

"It might be a good thing if you could come prepared to make some remarks. I find there is a disposition on the part of the public to charge the railway with carelessness and mismanagement."

"I'll say a word or two," replied Mr. Hardy; and after a brief talk on business matters his friend went out.

Robert immediately sat down to his desk, and for an hour, interrupted only by an occasional item of business brought to him by his secretary, he jotted down copious notes. The thought which had come

to him when his friend suggested the meeting was this : he would go and utter a message that burned within him, a message which the events of the past few days made imperative should be uttered. He went home absorbed in the great idea. He had once in his younger days been famous for his skill in debate, so he had no fear of his power to deliver a message of life at the present crisis in his own. He at once spoke of the meeting to his wife.

"Mary, what do you say? I know every minute is precious. I owe to you and these dear ones at home a very sacred duty ; but no less, it seems to me, is my duty to the society where I have lived all these years, doing literally nothing for its uplifting toward God who gave us all life and power. I feel that He will put a message into my mouth that may prove a blessing to this community. It seems to me this special opportunity is providential."

"Robert," replied his wife, smiling at him through happy tears, "it is the will of God. Do your duty as He makes it clear to you."

It had been an agitating week to the wife. She anticipated its close with a feeling akin to terror. What would the end be? She was compelled to say to herself that her husband was not insane ; but the thought that he was really to be called out of the world in some mysterious manner at the end of the rapidly approaching Sunday had several times come over her with a power that threatened her own reason. Nevertheless, the week, so far, in spite of its terror and

agitation, had a sweet joy for her. Her husband had come back to her, the lover as he once had been, only with the added tenderness of all the years of their companionship. She thanked the Father for it, and when the hour came for Robert to go down to the meeting she blessed him and prayed heaven to make his words to the people like the words of God.

"Father, what do you want me to do? Shall I stay here?" asked George, who had not stirred out of the house all day. He had watched by Clara faithfully. She was still in that mysterious condition of unconsciousness which made her case so puzzling to the doctor.

Mr. Hardy hesitated a moment, then said : "No, George ; I would like you to go with me. Alice can do all that is necessary. But let us all pray together now before we go out. The Lord is leading us mysteriously, but we shall some time know the reason why."

So in the room where Clara lay they all kneeled down, except Will, who lay upon a lounge near his unconscious sister. Mr. Hardy, as he clasped his wife's hand in his own, poured out his soul in this petition :

"Dear Lord, we know Thou dost love us, even though we cannot always know why Thou dost allow suffering and trouble ; and we would thank Thee for the things that cannot be destroyed, for the loves that cannot suffer death, for the wonderful promises of the life to come. Only we have been so careless of the

things that belong to Thy kingdom! We have been so selfish and forgetful of the great needs and sufferings and sins of earth. Pardon us, gracious Redeemer! Pardon me, for I am the chief offender! Yea, Lord, even as the robber on the cross was welcomed into Paradise, welcome Thou me. But we pray for our dear ones. May they recover! Make this beloved one who now lies unknowing among us to come back into the universe of sense and sound, to know us and smile upon us again. We say, 'Thy will be done.' Grant wisdom, for Thou knowest best; only our hearts will cry out for help, and Thou knowest our hearts better than any one else. Bless me this night as I stand before the people. This is no selfish prayer, dear Lord. I desire only Thy glory; I pray only for Thy kingdom. But Thou hast appointed my days to live. Thou hast sent me the message, and I cannot help feeling the solemn burden and joy of it. I will say to the people that Thou art most important of all in this habitation of the flesh. And now bless us all. Give us new hearts. Make us to feel the true meaning of existence here. Reveal to us Thy splendour. Forgive all the past and make impossible in the children the mistakes of the parents. Deliver us from evil, and Thine shall be the glory forever. Amen."

When Mr. Hardy and George reached the town hall they found a large crowd gathering, and they had some difficulty in gaining entrance. Mr. Hardy at once passed up to the platform, where the chairman

of the meeting greeted him and said he would expect him to make some remarks during the evening. Robert sat down at one end of the platform and watched the hall fill with people, nearly all well known to him. There was an unusually large crowd of lads and young men, many of his own employés from the shops, and a great number of citizens and business men—a representative audience for the place, brought together under the influence of the disaster and feeling somewhat the breaking down of artificial social distinctions in the presence of the grim leveller Death, who had come so near to them the last few days.

There were the usual opening exercises common to such public gatherings. Several well-known business men and two or three of the ministers, including Mr. Jones, made appropriate addresses. The attention of the great audience was not laboured for, the occasion itself being enough to throw over the people the spell of subdued quiet. When the chairman announced that "Mr. Robert Hardy, our well-known railroad manager, will now address us," there was a movement of curiosity and some surprise, and many a man leaned forward and wondered in his heart what the wealthy railroad man would have to say on such an occasion. He had never appeared as a speaker in public, and he passed generally in Barton for the cold, selfish, haughty man he had always been.

Mr. Hardy began in a low, clear tone :

"Men and women of Barton: To-night I am not

the man you have known these twenty-five years that I have been among you. I am, by the grace of God, a new creature. As I stand here I have no greater desire in my heart than to say what may prove to be a blessing to all my old townspeople and to my employés and to these strong young men and boys. Within a few short days God has shown me the selfishness of a human being's heart. That heart was my own; and it is with feelings none of you can ever know that I look into your faces and say these words."

Robert paused a moment as if gathering himself up for the effort that followed, and the audience, startled with an unexpected emotion by the strange beginning, thrilled with excitement, as, lifting his arm and raising his voice, the once cold and proud man, his face and form glowing with the transfiguration of a new manhood, exclaimed:

"There is but one supreme law in this world, and it is this: Love God and your neighbour with heart, mind, soul, strength. There are but two things worth living for: the glory of God, and the salvation of man. To-night I, who look into eternity in a sense which I will not stop to explain, feel the bitterness which comes from the knowledge that I have broken that law and have not lived for those things which alone are worth living for. But God has sent me here to-night with a message to the people which my heart must deliver. It is a duty even more sacred in some ways than what I owe to my own

kindred. I am aware that the hearts of the people are shocked into numbness by the recent horror. I know that more than one bleeding heart is in this house, and the shadow of the last enemy has fallen over many thresholds in our town. Did I not enter into the valley of the shadow of death myself as I stumbled over the ghastly ruins of that wreck, my soul torn in twain for the love of three of my own dear children? Do I not sympathise in full with all those who bitterly weep and lament and sit in blackness of horror this night? Yea; but, men of Barton, why is it that we are so moved, so stirred, so shocked by the event of death, when the far more awful event of life does not disturb us in the least? We shudder with terror, we lose our accustomed pride or indifference, we speak in whispers and we tread softly in the presence of the visitor who smites but once and then smites the body only: but in the awful presence of the living image of God we go our ways careless, indifferent, cold, passionless, selfish.

"I know whereof I speak, for I have walked through the world like that myself. But death cannot be compared for one moment with life for majesty, for solemnity, for meaning, for power. There were seventy-five persons killed in the accident. But in the papers this morning I read in the column next to that in which the accident was given, in small type and in the briefest of paragraphs, the statement that a certain young man in this very town of ours had been arrested for forging his father's name on a cheque and

was a fugitive from the law. Every day in this town and in every town all over the world events like that, and worse than that, occur. Nay, in this very town of ours more than seventy-five souls are at this very moment going down into a destruction far worse than the one under that fated bridge, and the community is not horrified over it. How many mass meetings have been held in this town within the last twenty-five years over the losses of character, the death of purity, the destruction of honesty? Yet they have outnumbered the victims of this late physical disaster a thousandfold. And what does mere death do? It releases the spirit from its house of earth. Aside from that, death does nothing to the person. But what does life do? Life does everything. It prepares for heaven or for hell. It starts impulses, moulds character, fixes character. Death has no kingdom without end. Death is only the last enemy of the many enemies that life knows. Death is a second; life is an eternity. O men, brothers, if, as I solemnly and truly believe, this is the last opportunity I shall have to speak to you in such large numbers, I desire you to remember, when I have vanished from your sight, that I spent nearly my last breath in an appeal to you to make the most of daily life, to glorify God and save men!

“The greatest enemy of man is not death; it is selfishness. It sits on the throne of the entire world. This very disaster which has filled the town with sorrow was due to selfishness. Let us see if that is

not so. It has been proved by investigation already made that the drunkenness of a line inspector was the cause of the accident. What was the cause of that drunkenness? The drinking habits of that inspector. How did he acquire them? In a saloon which we taxpayers allow to run on payment of a certain sum of money into our town treasury. So, then, it was the greed or selfishness of the men of this town which lies at the bottom of this dreadful disaster. Who was to blame for the disaster? The line inspector? No. The saloon keeper who sold him the liquor? No. Who, then? We ourselves, my brothers; we who licensed the selling of the stuff which turned a man's brain into liquid fire and smote his judgment and reason with a brand from out the burning pit. If I had stumbled upon the three corpses of my own children the night before last, I could have exclaimed in justice before the face of God, 'I have murdered my own children,' for I was one of the men of Barton to vote for the license which made possible the drunkenness of the man in whose care were placed hundreds of lives.

"For what is the history of this case? Who was this wretched line inspector? A man who, to my own knowledge, trembled before temptation; who, on the testimony of the foreman at the shops, was, and always had been, a sober man up to the time when we as a municipality voted to replace the system of no license with the saloon, for the sake of what we thought was a necessary revenue. This man had

no great temptation to drink while the saloon was out of the way. Its very absence was his salvation. But its public open return confronted his appetite once more, and he yielded and fell. Who says he was to blame? Who are the real criminals in the case? We ourselves, citizens, we who, for the greed of gain, for the saving of that which has destroyed more souls than any other one thing, made possible the causes which led to the grief and trouble of this hour. Would we not shrink in terror from the thought of lying in wait to kill a man? Would we not repel with holy horror the idea of murdering and maiming seventy-five people? We would say 'Impossible!' Yet, when I am ushered at last into the majestic presence of Almighty God, I feel convinced I shall see in His righteous countenance the sentence of our condemnation just as certainly as if we had gone out in a body and by wicked craft had torn out the supporting timbers of that bridge just before the train thundered upon it. For did we not sanction by law a business which we know tempts men to break all the laws; which fills our jails and poorhouses, our reformatories and asylums; which breaks women's hearts and beggars blessed homes and sends innocent children to tread the paths of shame and vagrancy; which brings pallor into the face of the wife and tosses with the devil's own glee a thousand victims into perdition with every revolution of this great planet?

"Men of Barton, say what we will, we are the

authors of this dreadful disaster. If we sorrow as a community, we sorrow in reality for our own selfish act. And oh, the selfishness of it! That clamouring greed for money! That burning thirst for more, and more, and more, at the expense of every godlike quality, at the ruin of all that our mothers once prayed might belong to us as men and women! What is it, ye merchants, ye business men, here to-night, that ye struggle most over? The one great aim of your lives is to buy for as little as possible and sell for as much as possible. What care have ye for the poor who work at worse than starvation wages, so long as ye can buy cheap and sell at large profits? What is the highest aim of us railroad men in the great whirl of commercial competition which seethes and boils and surges about this earth like another atmosphere? What is our aim but to make money our god and power our throne? How much care or love is there for flesh and blood at times when there is danger of losing dollars? But, oh, Almighty Saviour! it was not for this that we were made! We know it was not.

"To whom am I speaking? To myself. God forbid that I should stand here to condemn you, being myself the chief of sinners for these twenty-five years. What have I done to bless this community? How much have I cared for the men in my employ? What difference did it make to me that my example drove men away from the Church of Christ, and caused anguish to those few souls who were trying to redeem

humanity? To my just shame I make answer that no one thing has driven the engine of my existence over the track of its destiny except self. And oh, for that Church of Christ that I professed to believe in! How much have I done for that? How much, O fellow members (and I see many of you here to-night), how much have we done in the best cause ever known and the greatest organisation ever founded? We go to church after reading the Sunday morning paper, saturated through and through with the same things we have had poured into us every day of the week, as if we begrudged the whole of one day out of seven. We criticise prayer and hymn and sermon, drop into the contribution box half the amount we paid during the week for a theatre or concert ticket, and think we have done our duty as Christians. Then when anything goes wrong in the community, or our children fall into vice, we charge the church with weakness and the preacher with lack of ability. Shame on us, men of Barton, members of the Church of Christ, that we have so neglected our own church prayer meeting, that out of a resident membership of more than four hundred, living in easy distance of the church, only sixty have attended regularly and over two hundred have been to that service only occasionally. Yet we call ourselves disciples of Christ! We say we believe in His blessed teachings; we say we believe in prayer; but in the face of all these professions we turn our backs with indifference on the very means of spiritual

growth and power which the Church places within our reach. If Christ were to come to the earth to-day, He would say unto us: 'Woe' unto you, church members, hypocrites!' He would say unto us: 'Woe unto you, young disciples in name, who have promised to love and serve Me, and then, ashamed of testifying before men, have broken promise and prayer, and ridicule those who have kept their vows sacredly!' He would say to us men who have made money and kept it to ourselves: 'Woe unto you, ye rich men, who dress softly and dine luxuriously and live in palaces, while the poor cry aloud for judgment and the labourer sweats for the luxury of the idle! Woe unto you who speculate in flesh and blood, and call no man brother unless he lives in as fine a house and has as much money in the bank! Therefore ye shall receive the greater condemnation!'

"O Self! god of the earth yet! With two thousand years of the Son of God written into the world's history, still goes up the cry of those who perish with hunger, who break into the sanctuary of their souls, because they cannot get work to do and are weary of the struggle of existence. Self! thou art king; not Jesus Christ! But oh, the shame of it! the shame of it! Were it not for my belief in the mighty forgiveness of sins, I would stand here to-night with no hope of ever seeing the paradise of God. But resting in that hope I wish to say to you who have beheld the example of my selfish life, I repudiate it

all. In the world I have passed as a moral citizen and a good business man ; in society there has been no objection to my presence, on account of my wealth and position ; in the church I have been tolerated because I gave it financial support ; but in the sight of that perfect Crucified Lamb of God I have broken the two greatest laws which He ever announced. I have been a sinner of the deepest dye ; I have been everything except a disciple of Jesus Christ. I have prayed for mercy. I believe my prayer has been answered.

“ I am conscious that some here present may think that what I have said has been in poor taste ; that it has been an affront to the object of the meeting or an insult to the feelings of those who have called the audience together. In order that the people may know that I am sincere in all I have said, I will say that I have placed in the bank the sum of \$10,000 to be used as the committee may deem wisest and best for the education of children in bereaved homes or for any other help to those who need it. This money is God's. I have robbed Him and my brother man all these years. Whatever restitution I can make in the next few days I desire to make.

“ But the great question with us all, my friends, is not this particular disaster. That will in time take its place as one event out of thousands in the daily life of this world. The great event of existence is not death, it is life. The great question of the world is not the tariff or the silver question or the labour

question or temperance or this or that or the other. The great question of the whole world is selfishness in the heart of man. The great command is, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God.' If we had done that in this town, I believe such a physical disaster as the one we lament would never have happened. That is our great need.

"If we go home from this meeting resolved to rebuke our selfishness in whatever form it is displeasing to God, and if we begin to-morrow to act out that resolution in word and deed, we shall revolutionise this town in its business, its politics, its church, its schools, its homes. If we simply allow our emotions to be stirred, our sympathies to be excited to the giving of a little money on this occasion, it will do us and the community little permanent good. God wants a complete transformation in the people of this nation. Nothing less than a complete regeneration can save us from destruction. Unconsecrated, selfish money and selfish education, selfish political power and selfish genius in art, letters, and diplomacy, will sink us as a people into a gulf of annihilation. There is no salvation for us except in Jesus Christ. Let us believe in Him and live in Him.

"I have said my message. I trust you have understood it. I would not say otherwise if I knew that I should step off this platform now and stand before the judgment seat of Christ. God help us all to do our duty! Time is short; eternity is long. Death is nothing; life is everything."

Five years after this speech of Robert Hardy to the people of Barton in the town hall, one who was present in the audience described the sensation that passed through it when the speaker sat down to be like a distinct electric shock which passed from seat to seat, and held the people fixed and breathless as though they had been smitten into images of stone. The effect on the chairman of the meeting was the same. He sat motionless. Then a wave of emotion gradually stirred the audience, and without a word of dismissal they poured out of the building and scattered to their homes.

Robert found George waiting for him. The father was almost faint with the reaction from his address. George gave him his arm and the two walked home in silence.

Thus ended Robert Hardy's fourth day.

FRIDAY—THE FIFTH DAY.

WE must pass hastily over the events of the next day in Robert Hardy's life. The whole town was talking about his surprising address of the night before. Some thought he was crazy. Others regarded him as sincere, but after the first effect of his speech had worn off they criticised him severely for presuming to "preach" on such an occasion. Still others were puzzled to account for the change in the man, for that a change had taken place could not be denied. How slow men are to acknowledge the power of God in the human heart! Mr. Hardy went about his business very little moved by all this discussion. He realised that only two days more remained.

He spent the afternoon and evening at home, but was interrupted by several calls. After tea the entire family gathered in the room where Clara lay. She was living, but was still unconscious. As Mrs. Hardy was saying something to her husband about his dream and the events of the day before, Clara suddenly opened her eyes and distinctly called out the words :

"Father, what day is it?"

It was like a voice out of the long-dead past. Mr. Hardy, sitting by the side of the bed, replied quietly, while his heart beat quickly :

“This is Friday night, dear child.”

Another question came uttered in the same strange voice :

“Father, how many more days are left for you ?”

“To-morrow and Sunday.”

The voice came again :

“I shall go with you then.”

The eyes closed and the form became motionless as before.

It was very quiet in the room at the close of Robert Hardy's fifth day.

SATURDAY—THE SIXTH DAY.

THOSE words of Clara, "I shall go with you then," filled the family with dismay. Mr. Hardy bowed his head and groaned. Mrs. Hardy, almost beside herself with grief and terror, flew to the side of the girl, and with beseeching cries and caresses tried to bring back to consciousness the mind that for a moment or two had gleamed with reason and then had relapsed into that mysterious condition in which it had been lying for three days ; but all in vain. The eyes were closed ; the form was rigid. The others, George and Will and Bess, grew pale, and Bess cried, almost for the first time since the strange week began. Robert was the first to break the grief with a quiet word. He raised his head, saying :

"I do not believe Clara is going to die when I do."

"Why, father, what makes you think that ?" cried Alice.

"I don't know ; I can't give any exact reason. I only know that I don't believe it will happen."

"God grant that she may be spared to us !" said Mrs. Hardy. "Oh, Robert, it is more than I can bear ! Only to-day and to-morrow left ! It can't be

real. I have battled against your dream all the week. It was a dream only ; I will not believe it to be anything else. You are not ill ; there is no indication that you are going to die. I will not, I cannot, believe it ! God is too good. And we need you now, Robert. Let us pray God for mercy."

Robert shook his head sadly but firmly.

"No, Mary ; I cannot resist an impression so strong that it has become conviction, that in some way I shall be called from you on Sunday night. I have struggled against it, but it grows upon me. God is merciful. I do not question His goodness. How much did I deserve even this week of preparation after the life I have lived ? And the time will not be long before we shall all meet there. God grant that it may be an unbroken company !"

Mr. Hardy spoke as any one in his condition would. The children drew about him lovingly. Bess climbed into his lap and laid her face against her father's, while the strong man sobbed as he thought of all the years of neglected affection in that family circle. The rest of the evening was spent in talking over the probable future.

George, who seemed thoroughly humbled now, listened respectfully and even tearfully to his father's counsel concerning the direction of business and family matters. The lad was going through a struggle with himself which was apparent to all in the house. Ever since his mother had seen him kneeling down in the night watch, he had shown a new spirit. It remained

to be seen whether he had really changed, or whether he had been merely frightened for the time being into good behaviour.

Saturday morning found the Hardys weary with the agitation of the week, but bearing up under a strange excitement which only the prospect of the father's approaching death or removal could have produced.

Robert could not realise that his week was almost at an end. Why, it seemed but yesterday that he had dreamed after the Sunday evening service! As on every other day, he asked himself the question, "What shall I do?" Only when he had prayed could he answer the question. Then the light came. Who says prayer is merely a form? It is going to God for wisdom and getting it. It is crying out for light, and lo! the darkness flees. It is spreading out our troubles and our joys and our perplexities and our needs, and finding God Himself the best possible answer to them all. Robert Hardy had been learning this of late, and it was the one thing that made possible to him the calmness of the last two days allotted him.

The day was spent in much the same way that the other days had been spent. He went down to his office about ten o'clock, and after coming home to lunch went down again, with the intention of getting through all the business and returning home to spend the rest of the time with the family. Towards three o'clock, when the routine work of the shops was

disposed of, the manager felt an irresistible desire to speak to the men in his employ. Those in his department numbered about eight hundred, and he knew how impossible it would be for him to speak to them individually. He thought a minute and then called Burns in and gave an order that made the foreman stare in the most undisguised wonder.

“Shut the works for a little while, and ask the men to get together in the big machine shop. I want to speak to them.”

Burns had been astonished so often this week that, although he opened his mouth to say something, he was able to repress his wonder. After staring blankly at his employer for a minute he turned and went out to execute the order.

The great engine was stopped. The men from the casting rooms and the carpenter shops and the storerooms and the repairing departments came trooping into the big machine shop and sat or leaned on the great grim pieces of machinery. As the shop filled, the place began to take on a strange aspect never seen there before.

Mr. Hardy crossed the yard from the office, followed by the clerks and minor officers of the company, all curious to hear what was coming. Mr. Hardy mounted one of the planers and looked about him. The air was still full of gas, smoke, and that mixture of fine iron filings and oil which is characteristic of such places. The men were quiet and respectful. Many of them had heard the manager's

speech of Thursday night at the town hall. Most of them were aware that some change had taken place in him. It had been whispered about that he had arranged matters for the men injured in the Sunday accident so that they would not suffer for anything.

The grimy, hard-muscled, hard-featured crowd of eight hundred men all turned their eyes upon the figure standing erect and pale-faced on the great planer, and he in turn looked out through the blue murky atmosphere at them with an intensity of expression which none in that audience understood. As Mr. Hardy went on with his speech they began to understand what that look meant.

"My brothers," began the manager with a slight tremble in the words so new to him, "as this may be the last time I shall ever speak to you, I want to say what I feel I owe to you. For twenty-five years I have carried on the work in this place without any thought of the eight hundred men in these shops, except as their names were on the pay roll of the company. It never made any difference to me when your wives and children grew sick and died. I never knew what sort of houses you lived in, except that in comparison with mine they must have been very crowded and uncomfortable. For all these twenty-five years I have been as indifferent to you as a man possibly could be to men who work for him. It has not occurred to me during this time that I could be anything else. I have been too selfish to see my relation to you and act upon it.

"Now I do not call you in here to-day to apologise for twenty-five years of selfishness—not that alone; but I do want you to know that I have been touched by the hand of God in such a way that before it is too late I want to call you all 'brothers.' I ask that when you think of me hereafter it may be as I am now, to-day, not as I have been in all the past years.

"It is not for me to say how far or in what manner I have trampled on the brotherhood of the race. I have called myself a Christian. I have been a member of a church. Yet I confess here to-day that under the authority granted me by the company I have more than once dismissed good, honest, faithful workmen in large bodies, and cut down wages unnecessarily to increase dividends, and have thought of the human flesh and blood in these shops as I have thought of the iron and steel here. I confess all that and more. Whatever has been unchristian I hope will be forgiven.

"There are many things we do to our fellowmen in this world which abide—the sting of them, I mean. The impress of my selfishness is stamped on this place. It will take years to remove it. I might have been far more to you. I might have raised my voice, as a Christian and an influential director, against the Sunday work and traffic; I never did. I might have relieved unnecessary discomfort in different departments; I refused to do it. I might have helped the cause of temperance in this town by trying to

banish the saloon ; instead of that I voted to license an establishment of crime and poverty and disease. I might have used my influence and my wealth to build healthy, comfortable homes for the men who work on this line ; I never raised my finger in the matter. I might have helped to make life a happier, sweeter thing to the nearly one thousand souls in this building ; but I went my selfish way, content with my own luxurious home and the ambition for self-culture and the pride of self-accomplishments. Yet there is not a man here to-day who isn't happier than I am.

"In the name of the good God, who forgives our sins for Jesus' sake, I wish you the wish of a man who looks into the other world and sees things as they really are. I do not desire you to think of my life as a Christian life. It has not been such ; but as you hope to be forgiven at last, forgive all wrongs at my hands.

"You are living in the dawn of a happier day for labour. There are Christian men in business, and some few connected with railroads, who are trying to apply the principles of Christianity to the business and traffic of the world. My probable successor in these shops is such a man.

"God is love. I have forgotten that myself. I have walked through life forgetful of Him. But I know that He is drawing the nations and the world together to-day in true sympathy. The nations that are persistently defiant and disobedient to God shall

perish. The rulers who haughtily take God's place and oppress the people shall be destroyed. The men of power and intelligence and money who use these three great advantages merely to bless themselves and add to their own selfish pleasure and ease shall very soon be overthrown. I would give all I possess to be able to live and see a part of it come to pass. Men, brothers, some of you younger ones will live to see that day.

"Love God and obey Him. Envy not the rich. They are often more miserable than you imagine. True happiness consists in a conscience at peace with God and a heart free from selfish desires and habits. I thank you for your attention. You will know better why I have said all this to you when you come in here again to work next Monday. My brothers, God bless you! God bless us all!"

When Robert stepped down from the planer and started towards the door, more than one black hand was thrust into his with the words, "God bless you, sir!" He felt a strange desire to weep. Never before had he felt that thrill shoot through him at the grasp of the hand of his brother man. His speech had made a profound impression on the men. Many of them did not understand the meaning of certain sentences; but the spirit of Mr. Hardy was unmistakable, and the men responded in a manner that touched him deeply.

He finally went into his office; the big engine started again, and the whirl and dust and clangour of

the shops went on. But men bent over their work there, in the gathering dusk of the winter day, who felt a new heart-throb at the recollection of the pale face and sincere word of the man who had broken a selfish silence of a quarter of a century to call them brothers. Oh, Robert Hardy, what glorious opportunities you missed to love and be loved ! With all your wealth you have been a very poor man all your life until now, the next to the last day of it !

There is little need to describe the rest of this day. Robert went home. Every one greeted him tenderly. His first inquiry was for Clara. Still in that trance-like sleep ; would she never wake ? Mrs. Hardy shuddered with fear. She had spent much of the day in prayer and tears. The evening sped by without special incident.

James Caxton came and joined the family circle. His presence reminded Mr. Hardy of the old quarrel with the young man's father. He said to James that if anything should prevent him from seeing his father the next day, James might tell him how completely and sincerely he wished the foolish quarrel forgotten and his own share in it forgiven.

So that day came to a close in family conference, in tears, in fear and hope and anxiety and prayer. But Mrs. Hardy would not lose all hope. It did not seem to her possible that her husband could be called away the next night.

SUNDAY—THE SEVENTH DAY.

A LICE, with the quickness of thought that always characterised her, planned that all the rest should go to church while she remained with Clara. Will was able to go out now. So, for the first time for months, Robert and his wife and Bess and the two boys sat together in the same seat. George had not been to church for a year, and Will was very irregular in his attendance.

The opening services seemed especially impressive and beautiful to Mr. Hardy. He wondered how he had ever dared to sit and criticise Mr. Jones' preaching and his reading of the hymns. To be sure, he was not a perfect speaker ; but his love for his people and for all men and his rarely good everyday life were so remarkable that they ought to have counted for more than they ever did. It is astonishing how many good deeds and good men pass through this world unnoticed and unappreciated ; while every evil deed is caught up and magnified and criticised by press and people, until it seems as if the world must be a very wicked place indeed and the good people very scarce.

Mr. Hardy joined in the service with a joy

unknown to him for years. He had come to it from the reading of his Bible instead of the reading of the morning paper, and from prayer instead of from thoughts of his business or a yawning stroll through his library. His mind was receptive of the best things in the service. He entered into it with the solemn feeling that it was his last.

When the minister gave out the text, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad," Mr. Hardy started, and leaned forward intently, feeling that the message of the preacher was peculiarly for him and strangely appropriate to his condition. The first statement of the sermon arrested his attention and held him irresistibly to the end of the argument :

"The judgment seat of Christ will not be a dreadful place to a man whose sins have been forgiven in this world ; but if he comes up to it seamed and scarred and stained with sins unrepented of and unforgiven because he has not asked God to forgive him, it will be a place of awful fear to his soul. There are men here in this audience who are as ready to die now as they ever will be ; they have made their peace with God ; they have no quarrel with their neighbours ; their accounts are all square in business ; they are living in loving relations with the home circle ; they have no great burdens of remorse or regret weighing them down : if God should call them this

minute to step up to the judgment seat, they would be ready.

“ But there are other men here who are not at all ready for such a tremendous event. They may think they are, but they are mistaken. How can they stand before the greatest Being in all the universe and have no fear, when they are unprepared to answer His questions: ‘Why did you not confess Me before men? Why did you not do as I commanded and bear the burdens of the weak instead of pleasing yourself?’ What will they say then?

“ It is true that Christ is all-merciful, all-loving. But will it make no difference with a soul whether it comes up to His judgment seat out of a life of selfish ease and indulgence or out of a life of self-sacrifice and restraint? When every possible offer of mercy is held out to men on earth and they will not accept it, will it be all the same as if they had availed themselves of it, when they come before the judgment seat of Christ? Why that would be to mock at the meaning of the incarnation and the atonement. It would be to cast scorn and contempt on the agony in the garden and the crucifixion. It would make unnecessary all the prayer and preaching. What possible need is there for men to preach a gospel of salvation unless there is danger of condemnation? If we are all going to be saved, no matter whether we accept God’s love in Christ or not, of what use is the Church? Why should we be anxious any more about our children? What difference does it make whether

they go to the bad here in this world, if in the world to come they will all be saved? For eternity will be so much grander and sweeter and more enduring than time that we might as well take it easy here and not pay much attention to the message, 'God so loved the world'—that is, if we are going to be saved *in any case*.

"Why should we care very much if it does say in the revelation of God's Word that the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, if we don't believe it? Why, the wicked will stand just as good a chance of eternal glory as the good, if the judgment seat of Christ does not mean a separation of the good from the bad. Let us close our churches and go home. Let us eat and drink and dance and be merry, for to-morrow we die; and after death the judgment, and after the judgment glory and joy and power and peace and life eternal in the presence of God. It is true we scorned Him on earth, but that will make no difference; He will receive us just the same. It is true we refused to believe in His only begotten Son after all He suffered of shame and agony for us; but that makes no difference; He will say, 'Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.' It is true we made fun of Christians, and mocked at prayer and sneered at faith; but that is not much to be afraid of. It is true we hated our neighbour and would not forgive an insult; but that is a little thing. It is true when the Holy Spirit pleaded with us a year or six months ago to confess Christ in public we told Him to leave us;

we were ashamed to do it in the presence of men, to confess Him who spread out His arms on a cross of bitterest agony for us ; but for all that we feel sure that when we march up to the judgment seat of Christ He will treat us just the same as He treats the disciples who have laid down their lives for the Master.

“ Then let us tear out of the Bible every line that speaks of retribution or punishment or judgment,—for we don’t like those passages : they hurt our feelings,—and let us leave only those words that speak of love and mercy and forgiveness : for those words are the only ones that can be true ; for those words don’t make us feel uncomfortable.

“ Away with everything that hurts our feelings, that makes us anxious, that sends us to our knees in prayer, that makes us confess Christ and live a life of self-denial and service ! for when the judgment seat is prepared and Christ sits down there and we appear before Him, He will receive us just as we come before Him—the pure and the impure ; the self-sacrificing and the selfish ; the humble and the proud ; the believer and the unbeliever ; infidels and scoffers and cowards and despisers of God’s love on the earth ; all the class of men who point to weak and imperfect Christians as an excuse for their own weak lives ; the drunkards and the liars and the oppressors of the poor ; the people who heard a thousand sermons full of gospel truth and despised them because of some imperfection in delivery or elocution ; all those men who went through life the betrayers of the home ; the

selfish politicians, who betrayed their country; the men who read the Bible and believed only the parts that didn't hurt their sensitive feelings; the young men who lived fast lives and sowed wild oats because a wicked and false public sentiment made them think it was excusable and perhaps necessary; and all other men and women who lived as they pleased, regardless of God and eternity: when all these shall appear before the judgment seat of Christ He will look upon them all alike, and with a smile of gracious pardon will reach out His almighty arm and sweep them all together into a heaven of eternal bliss, there to reign with Him in glory and power, world without end!

"But is this what Christ taught the world? Suppose what we have said is true: it turns His whole life into a splendid mockery. Foolishness and absurdity could go no further than to create a life like His and to put into His mouth such teachings as we have received, if at the judgment seat all souls, regardless of their acts in this world, are received on an equal footing into eternal life. And where is there any room in the teachings of Christ for a purgatory? Do we believe that there is one? Is it not the plain teaching that after the judgment the destiny of souls is fixed forever?

"But what could man wish more? Will he not have opportunity enough to accept the mercy of God before that time? Does he not have opportunity? If any soul appears at the judgment and complains

that he did not have a fair chance, will that gracious Judge condemn him if his complaint be true? We know He will not. But the facts of the judgment are these: at that time, whenever it is, upon the souls of men will be passed for their acts in the earthly life a verdict that will determine their everlasting destiny; and that verdict will be both just and merciful. For the crucified One could not pronounce otherwise. Those who have despised and neglected and disbelieved and refused to confess Him shall be separated from Him for ever; but those who have confessed and believed and tried to live like Him shall be in His presence continually. There will be a division of souls. It will not be based on wealth or position or birth or education or genius, but on Christlikeness—on that divine and eternal thing we call character. Everything else shall go away into destruction, into death, into punishment, into banishment from God, and banishment from God will be hell.

“But some soul starts up and says, ‘You are not preaching the gospel; you are preaching fear, hell, torments. Is this your boasted love of God?’ Yes; for what am I preaching, if not the love of God, when I say, ‘God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life?’ Is there no danger of perishing? Why did Christ come then? Why did He say the things He did? Why did He speak of the condemnation of the wicked and

unbelieving if that were not a part of the gospel? The gospel is glad tidings; but what makes it glad tidings? The danger we are in. What is salvation? It is the opposite of being lost. We cannot have one without the other. So I am preaching the gospel here to-day when I say, 'We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ!' There will be no fear to us then if we believe in Him, if we have lived His life here, if the things done in the body are good. And more than that: as long as this earth life continues, God's mercy is with us every moment.

"It is possible some soul is here who for years has lived selfishly within his own little round of pleasure. He looks back on a life of uselessness, of neglect of all that Christ did for him. He this day hears the voice of God. He listens; he repents; he cries out, smiting on his breast, 'God be merciful to me a sinner!' What then will God do? Will He reject him because he is old in sin? because he has wasted beautiful years? When he appears before the judgment seat will Christ say, 'You repented too late on earth! You cannot be saved now'? No! even if after a hundred years of shame and sin a soul with its outgoing breath, in genuine repentance and faith in the Son of God, cries out for mercy, that cry will be answered and he will be saved. What less of glory and power such a soul may experience in the realms of glory, we may not be able to tell. But he himself will be saved.

"Is not God merciful, then? Let no man depart

from this house of God fearful or despairing. The earthly life is full from beginning to end with the love of an Almighty Father. Shall men complain because they cannot have all of this life and all of the other too in which to repent and be forgiven? 'Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.' 'To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.'

"Men of Barton, you have heard the Word of God proclaimed from this desk to-day. Young men, will you wait until you are old in sin and shame before you repent and be saved? How do you know you will live to be old men? And what a life to live, even if you were sure of a hundred years, to pour out the dregs at last as an offering to Christ just to escape hell! O all men, hear ye this day the message of Christ! He is a Saviour of sinners. It is not necessary that any man go away from this service unsaved. You may believe here and now. Won't you do it? 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' Then go home and pray, rejoicing. And if the Almighty call you out and away from this prison of clay into His resplendent presence this very night, what will you have to fear? Not one thing. You have put your trust in Him. Your sins are all forgiven. You can appear before His judgment seat and await your verdict with a calm and joyful soul. For you know as you gaze into the loving countenance of your Redeemer and Judge that when He turns and speaks to you He will say,

'Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' Truly God is love !"

The prayer that followed the sermon seemed to bring all the souls in the church very close to God. The events of the past week had stirred the town deeply. The awful disaster so near them ; the speech of Mr. Hardy in the town hall ; rumours of the experience he was having,—all these had prepared the audience for just such a sermon on Sunday morning. Men bowed their heads and prayed in that house who had not done such a thing sincerely for many years.

Robert had many inquiries concerning himself and Clara to answer at the close of the service. He finally went up and thanked the minister for what he had said, and spoke as he had never spoken before in encouragement of his pastor's work. But it seemed to him that he must hasten homewards. The time was growing short ; he must have the rest of it with the dear ones in the home.

What need to describe the details of the afternoon ? Robert Hardy had the joy of knowing that all his children were with him, and at dark James came over and asked if he might join the circle. He did not know all that Mr. Hardy had gone through, but the children had told him enough to make him want to be with the family.

"Yes, come in and join the circle, James ! You're one of us," cried Mr. Hardy cheerfully. So James

drew up his chair and conversation was continued. They were sitting in the room upstairs where Clara lay facing an open fire. The doctor had called in the middle of the afternoon and brought two other skilled surgeons and physicians at Mr. Hardy's request. It was a singular case and nothing special could be done. This was the unanimous opinion after deep consultation, and after remaining some time the doctors had withdrawn.

When it grew dark Alice started to turn on the lights, but her father said, "Let us sit in the firelight." So they drew close together and in awe looked upon him who seemed so sure that God would call him away at midnight. Who shall recount the words that were uttered? the exact sentences spoken? the fears and hopes and petitions and tears of the wife? the commands of the father to his boys to grow up into the perfect manhood in Jesus Christ? the sweet words of love and courage that passed between him and his wife and daughters? These things cannot be described; they can only be imagined.

So the night passed. It was after eleven o'clock; the conversation had almost ceased and all were sitting hushed in a growing silence, when Clara spoke again, so suddenly and clearly that they were all startled and awed by it:

"Father! mother! where have I been? I have had such a dream! Where are you? Where am I!"

Mrs. Hardy arose, and with tears streaming down her face kneeled beside the bed and in a few words

recalled Clara to her surroundings. The girl had come out of her strange unconsciousness with all her faculties intact. Gradually she recalled the past, the accident, the dream of her father. She smiled happily on them all, and they for a while forgot the approach of midnight and its possible meaning to Mr. Hardy—all but himself. He kneeled by the bed, at the side of his wife, and thanked God that his dear one was restored. Suddenly he rose to his feet and spoke aloud, quietly, but clearly : “ Did you not hear some one calling ? ” His face was pale but peaceful. He bent down and kissed Clara, embraced his sons, drew his wife to him, and placed his hand on Bessie’s head ; then, as if in answer to a command, he gently kneeled down again by his chair, and as his lips moved in prayer the clock struck once more the hour of twelve. He continued kneeling there, nearer God than he had ever been in all his life before.

Thus Robert Hardy’s Seven Days came to an end.

THE END.

